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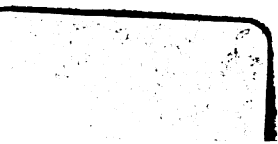
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IN THE CRUCIBLE

Tales from Real Life

By

ISABEL CECILIA WILLIAMS

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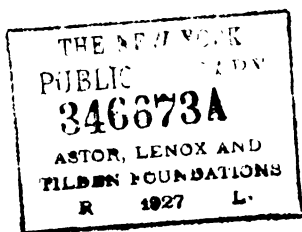
"As gold in the furnace, the Lord proves the just."



P. J. KENEDY & SONS

44 BARCLAY STREET, NEW YORK

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PREFACE.

FACT, not fiction, raises the heart to God. It is the real in life for which we crave. It is the little by-plays enacted in the changing scene around us, that awaken interest and have a power for good or evil that can be attained by no creation of the imagination. The playwright and the novelist may appeal to sentiment, and force from our eyes the passing tear, but the real, the lasting, the enduring influence is exerted by the unaffected record of actual joys and actual sorrows. For it is strong with the strength of truth.

The present volume is the outcome of many years devoted to works of mercy by one who was brought in close touch with God's poor and afflicted and was thus familiarized with the lights and shadows that give tone to the enduring picture of life. The idea of describing these passing clouds, so often tinged with the sunset glow, suggested itself at a time when slow

convalescence from a nervous breakdown, the price of self-sacrificing charity and devotion to duty, precluded more active occupation and left the soul in readier sympathy with the struggles and sorrows of humanity.

The first "Tale from Real Life," signed merely with the initials "I. W." was published by the Messenger of the Sacred Heart. So favorably was it received that the writer's identity was disclosed in subsequent numbers. The opening sketches were the outcome of personal observation, and prepared the way for anecdotes gleaned from others who had experiences to relate but who shrank from personal publication: thus, what had been intended as a few random stories became a regular feature of the Messenger. The courtesy of the Editors has made it possible to give the entire series a broader field of usefulness.

The inspiration of these Tales is life, real life, the life around us. Dominant throughout there is a sympathetic tone that harmonizes well with the plaint of poor, aching, human hearts. Life's joys are fleeting. Life's sorrows are abiding. Few are the days that have no passing cloud; fewer still the children of Eden

who have not to bear their share in the great expiation. The general theme of *Life's Tales* must be sad, but it is a sadness tempered by divine love. It raises the troubled soul above the turmoil and the strife, and awakens new hope in despondent hearts.

As gold in a crucible, so are the just proved in the furnace of humiliation. "In the Crucible," then has aptly been chosen as the title of the work; for it is in life's crucible, under the warming influence of divine love, that the soul is refined and purified of its dross. The alchemist of old hesitated at no sacrifice in quest of a substance that would change the baser metals into gold, and our Blessed Saviour, on Calvary's height, taught His loved ones, though it cost Him His own Precious Blood, the secret and wondrous power of turning suffering into merit, and of making the sorrow and afflictions of time the treasure and glories of eternity.

One cannot read these "Tales from Life" without feeling the spirit chastened, renewed and strengthened to take up with fresh energy the daily burden. Example is contagious. The blood of martyrs was the

seed of Christians, their fortitude strengthened the wavering and faint of heart. Where Christ's Champions had led, others felt that they too could follow. So also in our own days, touching examples of child-like faith and of heroic patience arouse our tenderest sympathies, teach us Christian resignation, and encourage us to follow in the footsteps of Christ's chosen ones, bearing the burden of our own crosses along the arduous path that ascends to Golgotha.

These Tales, then, must needs interest, and cannot fail to edify, combining as they do, the charm of fiction with the more sacred influence of truth. Their perusal will not be mere recreation; it should help to bring the soul forth from the crucible of life purified and free from dross.

JOSEPH J. WILLIAMS, S. J.

WOODSTOCK, MARYLAND,

FEAST OF OUR LADY OF SORROWS,

September, 1908.

BLACK BEAUTY.

SOMETHING was wrong with my little Black Beauty. In spite of her blindness, in spite of the pain she suffered, she had always been a cheerful little sprite, full of quaint fancies and amusing fairy tales of her own invention. Now, for three days in succession, she had not spoken a word to anyone except to politely answer questions. No matter what might happen, Black Beauty would never forget to be polite.

The long silence worried me, and as I washed and dressed the terrible cancer that had eaten away nearly one side of the poor little face and neck, I was wondering what new trouble could have come to this unfortunate child. She had been blind from birth, weak and sickly all her life, and consumption now had her in its grasp. This, in addition to the fearful sore on her face meant untold suffering, which she had borne with the utmost patience.

Her name? I do not know who first bestowed it. Perhaps the children in the dirty alley where she lived may have given it, for she was the only black child on the street. Anyway, Black Beauty she was called, and she seemed to like the name.

When the last bandage had been fastened in place, and I was preparing to leave her for the day, she suddenly asked a question that took my breath away.

“Did you ebber hab a baptism? an’, an’ please do you think y’ could get me one?”

Baptism? What did she know of baptism? Her mother was a large negress of the purest African type, full of pagan ideas and superstitions, so how or where could this girl have heard of baptism?

I sat beside her and she told me of a walk she had taken with a girl friend nearly a year before. In passing by a Catholic church, the music had attracted them and they went inside. The rest is best told in her own words, though it is impossible to give an idea of her rich darky accent.

“Oh, ma’am, it wus jus’ gran’; it wen’ right fru and fru you, an’ made you feel so good like. Den it was all

still, so still I was almos' frightened, an' den I hears a voice. It was a beau'ful voice, an' sounded jus' as if it knowed how sick I wus, an' jus' wanted to mek y' well agin. It tol' all 'bout a wunful place called Hebben, whar y' could go ef you wus good, only nobody couldn't go dar widout baptism. It mus' be gran', Hebben mus'; all music an' light, an' fairies too, I reckon, an' no pain or sickness. Oh, I want to go thar awful, but I doan know whar I kin git a baptism. Does *you* know whar I kin get one?"

So that was the trouble! This poor little pagan child who had never had anyone to teach her about God or religion, wanted to go to Heaven, and wanted to be baptized.

I told the child that if she really desired baptism, she should certainly have it, but there was a great deal she would have to learn first. She was her own happy self when I left her, promising to see what could be done about it.

That evening I called on Father O'Brien, pastor of St. Mary's Church, and told him of my little Black Beauty. He promised to see her at once, and if pos-

sible have her prepared for baptism. The result of that interview must have been satisfactory, for when I reached Black Beauty's home the next day, I found the child quite radiant with happiness. Father O'Brien, himself, was to instruct her, and would come every day, she said, and tell her about Heaven, and what she must do to reach it.

It was wonderful to see how readily that child's mind grasped the truths of our religion, and with what simple faith she accepted them. She never wearied of hearing over and over the wonderful story of the Saviour who came down on earth as a little child and suffered and died for us. The Father gave her a small crucifix, and I have found her holding that in her little black hand, tears streaming from the blind eyes, and whispering to herself:

"How good He wus! I jus' doan see how dey could hurt Him so; 'deed I doan."

Of necessity, the preparation was hurried, for the child was sinking fast, and at last the all important day arrived. Father O'Brien had interested some of the ladies of his congregation in my little patient, and they

dressed the room with flowers and pretty white draperies. They also erected a shrine to the Blessed Mother, whose name Black Beauty was to take. The child could not see these preparations, but they pleased her. She would handle the flowers lovingly, and choose just the ones she wanted laid at Blessed Mother's feet.

The girl's mother had been quite indifferent when we spoke to her of the coming ceremony, but we persuaded her to be present, half hoping it might make some impression on her pagan mind. Poor woman, to her God had never been more than a name. She had been a good mother to her suffering little girl, and I do not know whether it was the child's prayers or the sight of her happiness on that great day, when she was made a child of God and heir to Heaven; I know only that six months later the mother too asked to be instructed in the Faith, and in due time was received into the Church.

For some days after the all important event, little Mary Josephine (she insisted on being called by the full name every time anyone addressed her) seemed to

be better than she had been for several months. Then came a change for the worse, and the poor child's suffering became intense. It was pitiful to watch her agony, but her patience and sweetness never faltered for an instant. She held her crucifix in her hand, and the only thing she said during all those days of pain was:

"I'se glad fur to suffer like Him: Bless' Mudder will lub me, ef I'se like Him."

For nearly three weeks that great suffering lasted, and then came a day when I stood beside the bed and thanked God to see the child sleeping quietly, the pain that had racked her gone forever. 'As I watched her, she woke and reaching out her hand felt me beside her. The voice was weak and faint, so faint I could hardly catch the words, but I leaned over and she whispered to me slowly with great difficulty:

"I sutenly am glad you's come; I wan' tell you all 'bout it. Las' night de pain was drefful. I was almos' 'fraid I couldn't stand it nohow. So I prayed an' prayed an' ast Bless' Mudder to help me so I could be brave—like Him. Den de room was all filled wid a

lubly light, an' a beau'ful lady came an' stood up close to my bed. She jus' was lubly—all white an' shinin'—an' she had in her arms de deares' lil' baby, an' He was all white an' shinin' too. De lady she smiled at me, O so nice, an' hel' the baby close to me, an' He put His han' on my head an' said to me—'Mary'—jus' Mary, dat's all, but all de pain wen' right away, an' I fell asleep. Does you think dey will come agin to-night—de lubly lady an' de baby?"

I felt sure, as I looked at her, that they would indeed come for her before many hours, for the child was dying, dying fast.

She lingered though the day, and towards evening Father O'Brien came and administered the Sacrament of Extreme Unction. The child was too weak to speak, but we could see her lips move in answer, as the priest recited the prayers for the dying.

There was no more pain, no struggle or suffering; nothing but a deep ineffable peace. Somehow, it did not seem like death to me. It was not death, simply the faint breath growing fainter, the little hand I held around the crucifix gradually relaxing its hold, the

blind eyes closing on the things of this earth, which they had never beheld, to open again in the light of that Heaven she had longed for, and in the presence of the Blessed Mother and her dearly loved Son.

ON THE COUNTY ROAD

WITH a sigh of fatigue the vagrant threw himself down in the shadow of the trees and gazed into the distance. Mile after mile, over hill and valley, the county road lay hot and dusty beneath the pitiless rays of the noon-day sun. For mile after mile, since early morning, he had followed that road knowing it would eventually lead him to home, and rest, and Marjorie. Yes, that was all he wanted now, rest and Marjorie; Marjorie, his little sister, his pet and pride, in that far-distant, but never forgotten past; Marjorie, who had believed in him, and loved him, and clung to him when all besides had regarded him with eyes of cold suspicion. And yet he had not stolen that money; he had not, though appearances had been against him, and all his world save Marjorie had believed him guilty. He had been careless, weak, foolish, what you

will; but a thief? No, not that; at least not then in those early days. That came later when the prison life, prison association, and prison taint had done their work.

Somehow, the trial of that lad down yonder, the trial he had witnessed only yesterday, brought back vividly his own trial of so many years ago. Again he stood in the crowded court-room, facing judge and jury, the dreadful word "guilty" ringing in his ears. Again he heard that startled cry of protest which told him that Marjorie's faith was still unshaken. Again he listened, as in a dream, to a trembling, husky voice pronouncing sentence upon him. The voice was changed beyond recognition, though he knew it belonged to one who had been his father's best friend, one who had many a time held merry revel with him and Marjorie when they were little children. He dared not look up into the kindly, pitying face, for he knew even this old friend believed him guilty. Again he saw Marjorie as she was led away by the stern, proud man, his father's brother, who was the only relative he and she had left in the world. Her parting

smile had sunk deep into his memory to remain with him all the days of his life, that brave, loving smile so full of faith in him and hope for the future.

Yes, history was certainly repeating itself, only this time *he* was not the victim. Long ago, though innocent, he had been made to suffer for the guilty; now, though guilty, he was to go free and another to suffer in his place. He was sorry for the lad, oh! yes, he was sorry. He had not slept all night for thinking of him. The great, appealing eyes of the boy haunted him. He was a fool to have gone to the trial yesterday, but in spite of himself he was drawn to the place by an attraction he could not resist. He wished he had not gone, for he could not banish from his mind the despairing heartbroken look on the young man's face as his sentence was pronounced, and his frail, hard-working, little mother was borne fainting from the courtroom.

It was hard on those two, of course it was hard; but the term of punishment was not a long one and the boy was young. Three years could not matter much to a lad of his age. They would pass quickly and then

he would be free, still young, with all his life before him in which to live down his unfortunate past.

Yes, but could he live it down, could he ever live down those three years in jail? What answer would the other boy give to that question, that other boy, who had been tried and condemned unjustly so many years ago? What answer would the middle-aged man of to-day give—the thief, the vagrant, the wanderer on the face of the earth? What had those years in prison done for him, those years of bitterness and despair, of daily association with none but the very dregs of humanity? Let his present condition bear witness to what those years had done for him. What was he now but a broken-down tramp, old before his time, his health gone completely, creeping home for rest and shelter to the only being who would still hold out to him the hand of loving welcome?

That was just where the trouble lay. If he were younger, stronger, if he were not so sick, and worn, and wasted, he would go back and face those three years himself. He had served several terms already, and one more would not make much difference—that

is, if he were not so sick. The hard life he had led, the exposure, the tramping from place to place had brought on this fearful cold that he could not seem to lose. He had thought the coming of summer would cure his hacking cough, but it had not.

Now, his one hope lay in reaching Marjorie. She would know what to do for him; she would provide him with medicine and employ skilful physicians to cure this cold of his. And it was only a bad cold that ailed him; of course, that was all. Those dispensary doctors never knew anything, they always liked to frighten people. Just give him half a chance with plenty of rest, good food and proper treatment, and he would soon be strong and well again. Then, with Marjorie still to help him, he would begin the new life in which prison stripes, prison walls, and long tramps over the county road would be forgotten.

He knew he could depend upon Marjorie's help, she had offered it before, but he was too proud to take it then. That was when his first sentence had expired, and he had faced the world once more, faced it with courage and with hope. Despite the cynical warnings

of his prison acquaintances, he had confidence in his own ability to live down his foolish, wasted youth and early manhood. A few months later he met one of the very men who had warned him of the futility of such hopes. In despair, he clasped hands with his old prison-mate, and they had gone on their way together, the way of the jail-bird, the thief and the vagabond.

It was a stifling day in midsummer. Even on that shady hillside the heat was almost intolerable. What must it be down there in the sun-baked prison yard shut in by the high, brick walls he knew so well? And that poor boy down there, and that poor little mother! Why could he not forget them? Why should they persist in haunting him so? The old life and all it contained were left behind forever. His feet were turned now in a new direction, and there must be no looking back. He must banish these troublesome thoughts and snatch a few hours of sleep before resuming his journey in the cool of the evening.

Resolutely he closed his eyes, determined to think only of Marjorie and the happy future to which he was traveling. The stillness was profound, broken

only by the lazy droning of the bees flitting from flower to flower, or by an occasional whistle from a distant steamboat passing up the river. Still, it was long before slumber visited the weary tramp and even then it brought no relief from his restless wanderings. Through the long afternoon, he tossed and moaned in troubled dreams, in which Marjorie and that boy, with the great, pleading eyes were locked fast in a burning prison while he stood by unable to move or cry out, or render them any assistance.

When he awoke, he was trembling in every limb, great drops of sweat stood out upon his forehead. For a full moment he was unable to gather his scattered senses; then, as consciousness slowly returned, he sat up and looked about him. He must have slept the entire afternoon, for the sun was nearing the horizon, and it was time for him to be on his way. First he would make a supper on what was left of the food he had brought with him, and then for the county road once more, the county road and home.

His scanty repast was almost finished, when he became aware of a new sound, which seemed to har-

monize with the sylvan stillness rather than break in upon it. The faint notes of an organ floated to him on the evening breeze, and, mingled with them, came the tones of a woman's voice, subdued by distance, but sweet and tender and strangely familiar.

Fascinated, he arose and moved in the direction of the music, making his way with difficulty through the thicket of trees and bushes. The voice reminded him of Marjorie's, and the air was one he had heard her sing the last time he had seen her. It was on just such a summer night as this. He had come to the neighborhood of his old home, and had gone to see the familiar place. Under cover of the friendly darkness, he had stood for nearly an hour watching Marjorie as she played and sang to the old man, her uncle and guardian, dozing in his chair. Song followed song, and finally her fingers wandered into the plaintive melody that was borne to him now on the evening breeze. With sad eyes uplifted, she sang :

"Ave Maria, bright and pure,
Hear, oh, hear me when I pray.
Pain and sorrow try the wanderer
On his long and weay way ;

Fears and perils are around him,
Pray for him, sweet Mother, pray.
Mother of Christ, Star of the Sea.
Pray for the wanderer! Pray for me!"

He knew that hymn was really the prayer of her loving heart, a prayer for him who, all unknown, stood just outside her open window. As she had prayed that night, was this hidden singer praying now unconsciously for the wanderer who was being drawn nearer and nearer by the sound of her voice.

As he came out into the clearing he found himself facing a church, a little wayside chapel. The singing ceased, but the fingers of the musician strayed idly over the keys in snatches of exquisite harmony. Standing at the foot of the steps and looking up at the golden cross above the door, he felt a strange desire to enter. It was long, very long since he had been inside a church, much longer still since he had approached the Sacraments.

A vague unrest and longing seized upon him, a longing to open that door almost within reach of his hand and to breathe again the peaceful atmosphere of

the house of God. Slowly, he mounted step by step, then paused with his hand upon the door. In the very act of opening it, something seemed to hold him back, some feeling of unworthiness, some thought of the low estate to which he had fallen. It was not for such as he to enter that holy place. Once he might have done so, but not now. His place must be outside the pale. With downbent head, and an odd feeling of shame and despair in his heart he turned to descend the steps, but found himself face to face with someone coming up. His eyes encountered the kindly glance of an aged priest and a fatherly voice spoke gently to him:

“Why do you not enter, my son? The door is always open.”

For answer he simply hung his head and moved one step farther down, but a detaining hand was laid upon his arm. Again he looked up and met those kindly old eyes, which, in spite of their gentleness, seemed to read him through and through. The priest mounted the steps, threw open the door, then held out his hand to the vagrant with a smile of invitation. It was a

smile wholly pitying, wholly tender, and one he could not resist.

Together they entered the sacred edifice, and passed up the aisle to the very steps of the altar. As the tramp bent his knee before the Tabernacle for the first time in many years, the priest's hand was laid upon his shoulder, and the priest's voice whispered in his ear:

"Pray earnestly, my son; pray earnestly to the God of love and mercy, and I will pray for you. When you want me, you will find me over there in my confessional."

The tramp started. Confession? He had not thought of that. And yet, why not? A faint memory came to him of the wonderful peace and happiness that were his on the Communion days of his boyhood, and with that memory came the thought of the sin and trouble, the unrest and turmoil that had filled his life for so many years. Would it be possible for him ever to feel again that sweet peace and contentment? No, he feared not; there could never be peace or pardon for such as he. His sins were too black. They cried

aloud to Heaven for vengeance. No, confession was not for him, repentance was not for him, pardon was not for him.

At that moment, the level rays of the setting sun streamed through the stained glass window directly over the high altar, throwing into strong relief the picture of the Sacred Heart. The sad eyes looked with loving pity straight into the eyes of the tramp; the lips seemed half parted as though about to speak to him; one hand pointed to that Sacred Heart which is so filled with love for us, while the other was extended in silent appeal. As he gazed up at the sweet face, the same voice he had heard before commenced to sing again a low, minor strain, and the words of the hymn seemed as if spoken to his very soul.

"Two hands have haunted me for days,
Two hands of slender shape;
All crushed and torn as in the press
Is bruised the purple grape.
At work or meals, at prayer or play,
Those mangled palms I see;
And a plaintive voice keeps whispering:
'These hands were pierced for thee.'
For me, sweet Lord! for me?"

'Yea, even so, ungrateful child,
These hands were pierced for thee.'

"Through toil and dangers pressing on,
As through a fiery flood;
Two slender feet beside mine own
Mark every step with blood.
The swollen veins so rent with nails
It breaks my heart to see;
While the same, sad voice cries out afresh:
'These feet were pierced for thee.'
For me, dear Christ! for me?
'Yea, even so, rebellious soul,
These feet were pierced for thee.'

"As on they journey to the close,
Those wounded feet and mine,
Distincter still the vision grows,
And more and more divine.
For in my Guide's wide open side
The riven Heart I see,
And a tender voice sobs like a psalm:
'This Heart was pierced for thee.
For me, great God! for me?
'Yea, enter in, poor wandering one;
This Heart was pierced for thee.'"

As the last notes died away on the evening air and the singer rose to close the organ, a green curtain was drawn aside, it fell again, and the tramp had entered the confessional.

A little later, he stood once more on the county road gazing hungrily at the hills so sharply outlined against the brilliant western sky. Beyond those hills lay home—home and Marjorie. He fancied he could see her standing there in the midst of that sunset glory, her hands outstretched in loving welcome, her voice calling his name. Then her figure was blotted out by a vision of the boy down yonder, the boy in prison-stripes, looking out with despairing eyes through the barred window of his narrow cell. For a moment he stood there hesitating, then faced resolutely towards the dull grayness of the east and commenced to retrace the weary miles he had travelled that morning with hope singing high in his heart. That hope was gone, the hope of health, and happiness, and Marjorie, but in its place was something better, a great, wonderful content and peace such as he had never known.

The radiance gradually faded from the sky, the twilight shadows deepened into night, the stars came peeping and twinkling one by one and still his tired feet pressed onward. The moon rose in all its glory

and looked calmly down upon the solitary figure moving along the county road, upon the little wayside chapel on the hill and upon the form of the priest as he locked the chapel for the night and stood for a moment, his face turned towards the east, his lips moving in prayer. At the same moment it looked through the windows of a little home over there beyond the hills, and shone gently upon the upturned face of a woman from whose lips a song, half hymn, half prayer, arose to Heaven:

“Mother of Christ, Star of the Sea,
Pray for the wanderer. Pray for me.”

LITTLE JAMES.

"GOOD-NIGHT, James."

"Good-bye, mother."

"No, dear, only good-night. I shall see you early in the morning."

Once more that inscrutable smile and once more the gently insistent voice repeating: "Good-bye, mother."

The wistful look in the child's eyes and the soft clinging of the small hand I held made me loth to leave him, so I sat with him long beyond my accustomed time. It was very quiet in that little room, very still and peaceful in the dim red glow of the votive lamp burning before the picture of the Sacred Heart. James loved that little red light and we kept it burning for him always. During the weary watches of the night when he lay racked with pain, it was to him as a friend and brother. It would shine lovingly on the pictured face above and show him that Heart so bruised and

broken by man's ingratitude, and those pitying eyes that looked down on him with such tender compassion. He once told me the long nights of pain held no terrors for him now. While all the world was sleeping, he and the little red light kept watch with the Master whom he loved. Sitting there in the quiet and the semi-darkness, my mind travelled back over the eighteen months that had come and gone since I first saw my little James. It was in a cellar we had found him, our poor little hero with his crooked back, large, wistful eyes, and patient smile. For a year or more he had lain on that same pile of rags; dirty, vermin-infested rags that had actually grown into the sores on his back. The surgeon was obliged to cut away those rags and it would be impossible to describe the sores thus revealed. They were terrible beyond description and the suffering they caused must have been intense. When the poor little back was properly cared for and the child removed to a clean bed in the tenement we hired for them, we learned their story from the sister of sixteen, who was really father and mother to the three small brothers of whom my James was the youngest.

A common enough story it was, too, but none the less pitiful because so common. It was simply the story of a worthless father spending the greater part of his time and all the money he could lay hands on for drink, drink, drink. It was the story of a heartbroken mother who fought steadily against the overwhelming evil; fought for the sake of her children, for the sake of her own self-respect; fought bravely, patiently, until death had released her.

Things were not so bad while mother lived, the girl had explained. Somehow, mother had always managed to keep them clean and give them enough to eat and send her and the two older boys to school. But mother had died when Jimmie was only five, six years ago, that was, and they had gone from bad to worse ever since. She had tried to take mother's place and do the best she could for the boys, but father was drunk most of the time; there was no money to pay the rent and they had finally drifted to the cellar in which we had found them. Little Jimmie? Well, Jimmie had never been like the other boys. As a baby he was always weak and sickly, and his back had never been

right since the day father had dropped him on the floor.

Oh! no, father did not mean to hurt Jimmie, he would not hurt anyone. He was only playing with the child and—well—tossed him up in the air and failed to catch him as he came down. Father was drunk at the time and really did not know what he was doing. Since then, Jimmie's back had grown worse and worse, the hump grew bigger and the sores came and she did not know what to do for him.

Catholics? Of course they were Catholics. Mother had always sent her to Sunday-school, and since mother died she saw to it that the two boys went regularly; that is, until the last few months. Their clothes were so ragged now and they had no shoes to wear and, of course, they could not go to church looking like that. As for Jimmie, well, she was afraid Jimmie didn't know much about anything. He was not able to go to Sunday-school and she had been so busy trying to keep a roof over their heads and to find food for the four of them, that she really hadn't time to teach little Jimmie anything.

That was eighteen months before and it certainly would be hard to find a more ignorant little heathen than my James was at that time. But what else could be expected of him, poor child? He had never even heard the name of God mentioned except in the curses that fell from the lips of his drunken father. His eleven years of existence had been merely a succession of sleepless nights and days of pain, when he had lain on his little bed or on the pile of rags, gazing out upon life with great wistful eyes; wondering, always wondering. Wondering why it was that he should be so different from other people; why they should grow larger, stronger, day by day, while he remained always so small and weak and sickly; why they should be able to walk about, to come and go as they pleased, while he was obliged to lie quietly in the same place unless someone would lift and carry him. 'And he did not like to be carried, it hurt his back so terribly to be moved. Mother was the only one who knew how to lift him without making him scream with pain, and mother was gone, gone forever. Her going had left a great ache and loneliness in his little heart and again he wondered

why he should have to suffer so. Many a time he had beaten his pillow with his small fists and cried out in childish rebellion and anger that it was not fair, it was not right that he should have so much pain, so much sickness and trouble.

That was in the old days, however, days that were now but a memory to the patient little saint who welcomed each new pain with a smile,—glad that he should be deemed worthy to share in the sufferings of One who had said: “Take up your cross and follow Me.”

From the day of his First Communion, a great change had come over little James. To him, the great mystery of the Eucharistic Presence was no mystery at all, merely a strangely beautiful fact which he accepted with a child's simple faith. During his preparation for that most important event in his life, he had said one day:

“When people receive our Lord in Holy Communion, He comes to them really and truly just the same as if He walked right in through that door and came and stood beside me and held my hand and spoke

to me as you do. He comes just like that, doesn't He?"

"Yes, dear, just as truly and as really, only you cannot see Him."

"And when He comes to people like that, He stays with them until they drive Him away by being bad and committing sin, doesn't He?"

"Yes, dear."

"Well, when He comes to me, I am going to keep Him with me always, always. I shall never be cross or impatient again, and I'll never, never do anything to send Him away from me. Just think what it will be to have Him right here in this little room where I can talk to Him and tell Him about my pain when it gets very bad. Why, it will be even better than having mother back. Often, at night, when the pain would be so bad I'd think I couldn't stand it another minute, I'd just call to mother and she'd come and kneel beside me and hold me in her arms and talk to me until the pain would be easier and I'd go to sleep. That was ever so long ago, when I was only a baby, but I remember it all so well. Now, it will be even better than

that, for when our Lord comes to me, I am going to keep Him right here with me always. Then, in the night, when everyone is sleeping, I can call to Him and He will come and lay His hand on my head and I will tell Him about my pain. I'll not ask Him to take it away; I'll just ask Him to tell me how He bore all His pains and to help me be as brave as He was."

That my little James kept his word was very evident, for from the day of his First Communion not even the slightest whisper of complaint ever passed his lips. No matter what his sufferings, not even a sigh escaped him. During the daily process of washing and dressing the sores on his back, a process which was absolute torture to the poor child, he would fix his eyes on the pictured face of Christ and his lips would move as if begging for help to bear the pain. The only signs of his suffering were the tightly clenched little fists and the great drops that stood out upon his forehead. During those days the child seemed to live always in the presence of the Lord and Master whom he loved with absolute devotion and to count the moments from one Holy Communion until the

next. Nothing seemed to trouble him, no pain was too great for him to bear; he seemed rather to rejoice in suffering which drew him nearer to the One whom he wished to follow.

He spoke frequently of his mother, but never any longer with regret for her loss or with a wish to bring her back again. On one occasion he said to me: "You tell me God has taken mother to heaven, to see Him, to be happy with Him forever and ever. I used to cry for her, I used to say it was mean and wicked to have her taken away from me, I used to call out to her to come back if only for one little minute. But now, now I am glad she is in heaven, with *Him*, glad, so very glad. She will wait for me there; she'll be standing at the gate holding out her arms to her little boy. Then she will lift me as she used to do and hold me close, and carry me to Him. It will not be long now until I see her again, not long."

After a few moments silence, he added:

"Just think how good God has been to me. He took my own dear mother to heaven where she would be so happy and where I will be with her again so soon, and

then He sent you to me to take her place while I am still here. I think I will call you mother, too, I like the name "; and from that day I was " mother " to my little James.

All this and much more passed through my mind as I sat beside his bed and watched the child lying there on his little chest and elbows. Not the least of his sufferings was that he was obliged to remain always in that same position, owing to the terrible condition of his back.

It was growing late and I knew I should have left him long ago; but it was with great reluctance that I rose at last to say good-night. Holding his hand for a moment, I asked, as I always did, if there were anything he would like me to bring him. The answer was rather surprising:

" Yes, mother; peaches."

" Peaches! Why, it is the middle of winter; where could I find peaches now, unless— Will preserved peaches do, Jimmie?"

" Yes, mother, any kind will do."

" Very well, dear. I shall bring you some early in the morning."

“Bring them to-night, mother. I’ll not be here in the morning.”

For a moment I hesitated. It was very late and raining hard and I did not relish the idea of the long walk back again in the storm and darkness merely to humor, what seemed to be, a childish whim. One glance at the boy’s wistful eyes decided me, however. Half an hour later I was again beside him with the peaches he had asked for, but by that time all desire for them seemed to have gone, for he barely tasted them. Then, with a sigh, he laid his head down upon the pillow and his eyes closed wearily. Thinking he wished to sleep, I was turning softly away, but the little hand reached out for mine and held me back. He looked up at me with a smile, the sweetness of which I could never describe, and said gently: “Thank you, mother, good-bye.”

Once more I repeated: “No, Jimmie; good-night. I’ll see you in the morning.”

Once more, that strange, sweet smile, and once more: “No, mother; good-bye.”

And good-bye it was. Next morning when I reached my boy's bedside, it was to find that he had indeed said good-bye to me, good-bye to earth, good-bye to pain and suffering.

Looking on the peaceful face of our little saint, on which that heavenly smile still lingered, I heard again his "good-bye, mother" of the previous night and I wondered how the child had known that that good-night was to be the last. Had the angels come down and whispered to him that his sufferings were nearly over and that he would soon be with them for all eternity? Had his mother, waiting with outstretched arms at the gate of Paradise, called to him to come to her? Had the Master, whom he loved, murmured low into his ear that that night He would claim him for His own?

I know not, but this I do know; as I knelt by my little James that morning I could almost hear the flutter of angel wings and the music of angelic voices as the heavenly hosts sang joyous welcome to one more little saint now entered into the kingdom prepared for him from the foundation of the world.

**"AND A LITTLE CHILD SHALL LEAD
THEM."**

LONG after the child had slipped away into the land of dreams, the man sat in his lonely room thinking with bowed head and weary heart of the days now gone beyond recall. Her words had brought the past before him in a new light. The old year was "dying in the night," and in the man's heart something was dying too; the old rebellion, the old, reckless despair, these were slowly giving way before the faint, dim shadow of a coming hope, but the death struggle was a hard one.

A few hours before, he had stood in that tenement room and looked around. Bare walls of cracked plaster, dingy floor, a bed in one corner, and a broken chair by the window; these were all that met his glance, and he shuddered. So he had actually come to this, and

this was all he would know henceforth, unless—— Slowly his hand sought his pocket and drew forth a small phial on which his eyes rested with fascinated gaze. He walked to the window and sat down, holding the little bottle up to the light.

“It looks harmless enough,” he muttered; “yet death lies in those few drops of dark-colored liquid, and death means release. What is life to me that I should hesitate—life, did I say?” and he laughed, a hard, bitter laugh as he looked again around the dilapidated room. “Who could call *this* life, this mere struggle for existence?”

The child in the next room, a little cripple with the face of a saint and a precocious wisdom far beyond her years, heard the laugh, and something in it made her shiver.

“I wonder,” she mused, as she reached for her crutches, “if anything is wrong with my poor man.”

They were close friends, the man and the child. In fact, for many a day past, she had been the only human being with whom he had held friendly intercourse. Sitting there in the window, the death-giving poison

in his hand, he heard the tap of her crutches outside his door. The bottle was dropped into his pocket, but the man did not turn even when a small hand slipped into his and a small head rested against his arm. Without a word, he lifted her to his knee and leaned the crutches against the wall. She nestled contentedly in his arms and for some time watched the moody face that gazed through the window in the sullen silence of despair. Presently a hand reached up and patted his cheek, and a plaintive voice murmured:

“I don’t like my man when he looks like that. He isn’t a nice man at all. Please be good and tell me a story.”

He took the little hand in his and held it gently, but his face was still turned away as he answered bitterly:

“A story, child? The only story I could tell would not interest a little girl like you.”

“Oh, you don’t know,” returned the child. “It might. What is it about?”

“It is about a young man,” he answered; “a fool-

ish, headstrong young man, who had a good home, kind parents, everything he could wish for, and yet was not satisfied. He wanted to see the world, he wanted to see life and taste the joys of living, and he fretted at the restraints paternal authority imposed upon him. He left his home, this foolish young man, and plunged into the gay life of the gayest city in this country. My story is about an older man who has tasted life and found it very bitter; who has drained the cup to its very dregs and for whom there is nothing left but misery and despair. It is about a man who, by his own deeds, has become an outcast from his kind and a wanderer on the face of the earth.

“Poor man,” said the child softly. “Why doesn’t he go home again?”

“Home?” and once more he laughed that hard, bitter laugh. “They would be very glad to see him at home, wouldn’t they?”

“Well, why not?” persisted the child. “You said he had a kind father.”

“Yes.”

“And a mother?”

"Yes, once, but she died long ago. That is his one comfort now, that she did not live to see his disgrace."

"And he was a good little boy himself once and said his prayers and went to Sunday-school and made his First Communion like I did last month?"

"Yes," answered the man; "he did all that, but it was years and years ago, little one."

For a time the child mused quietly, and the man still looked with unseeing eyes on the tenement houses across the way. Then her voice again broke the silence.

"When we were preparing for our First Communion, the Father told us a story that was very much like yours about the foolish young man. Would you like to hear about it?"

"Yes, tell it to me," said the man.

"Well," said the child, "it was like this:

"Once upon a time, in a country ever so far from here, there lived an old man who had two sons. One day the youngest son said to him: 'Father, I am tired of staying here quietly at home. I want to see the world and have a good time. If you will give me

what money is to be mine, I will go away into distant countries and see something of life.'

"His father did not want him to go and begged him to stay at home, where they were all so safe and happy, but the young man would not listen to him; so the father gave him money and let him go. The son traveled for days and days through all kinds of beautiful countries and made many friends, and had a splendid time with them all, feasting and dancing and enjoying himself. He forgot all about his father and brother at home and could think only of his new friends and of how happy he was with them.

"Well, this went on for quite a long time, but at last he woke up one day to find that all his money was gone, and that he was all alone, without a cent and without a friend. You know," interposed the child, with a wise nod of her head, "people like that do not care to be your friends unless you have plenty of money and fine clothes and can give them a good time. The poor young man did not know what to do to keep from starving. He went to see some of the people who had helped spend his money, but they shut their doors in

his face, and would not speak to him if they saw him on the street. At last, one of them took pity on him and gave him some food, and said if he wanted to he could go out in the fields and tend the swine. I don't know exactly what kind of animals those are, do you?" asked the child.

"Well," answered the man half absently, "I think that is another name for pigs."

"Pigs!" exclaimed the child. "If they were pigs, why didn't he call them pigs? Anyway," she continued, "whatever they were, the young man was sent out to take care of them, and he had to sleep with them and eat with them too. He began to think about the home he had left, about his kind father and his brother, and he saw how foolish he had been. In the evenings he would sit on the hill and watch the sun set and know that somewhere over there was his own home. He would wonder what they were doing and if they ever thought of him. At last, he couldn't stand it any longer, so he just made up his mind to go back to his father and beg to be allowed to work for him as one of his servants. He said to himself: 'I

will arise and will go to my father and will say to him: Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before thee; I am not now worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.'

" So he traveled home again, walking all that long way, and sometimes he was so tired he could hardly move. Still he kept right on, and at last one day he stood on top of a hill and looked down at his old home in the little valley below. Then he grew frightened as he came nearer the house, and he said to himself: ' My father will be angry and will not forgive me; I do not dare go into his house.'

" Now, all that long time his poor father had been thinking of him and loving him and longing for him to come home again. Every morning the poor old man would go down to the gate and look along the road his son had traveled when he went away, and would say to himself: ' Perhaps my son will come home before evening.' All day he would watch the road, and when evening came and the son had not returned, he would say: ' Surely, to-morrow my son will come.'

"Then one day as he watched, a man appeared in the distance, a man who came along the road a little way and then stopped, as if he were afraid to go any farther. The man was yet a great way off, and the poor father's eyes were old and worn out with watching, but he knew it must be his son come home to him at last. He ran out to meet him, and as he drew nearer and saw his son so pale and tired, his clothes nothing but dirty rags, and his feet all torn and bleeding from the rough stones of the road, the father's eyes filled with tears of pity. He just took the young man in his arms and loved him and forgave him and told him he was glad, oh! so glad to have him home again. I guess," concluded the child, "that the son was pretty glad too, and I don't believe he ever wanted to go away again, do you?"

"I should imagine," replied the man, "that his one taste of wandering was quite enough to last the rest of his life. Still, I do not see how he could make up his mind to go home, a beggar, just because his life was ruined and he had no place else to go. I should think he would have crept away into a corner and died rather than do that."

“Well,” asked the child quickly, “wasn’t it better for him to go home than to leave his poor father watching at the gate forever? You forgot about his father.”

“True, I forgot about the father,” and a softened look crossed the man’s face.

All this had passed several hours before; the child was gone, night had come, and he still sat thinking, thinking, thinking, and his thoughts were of an old man watching with tear-dimmed eyes for the return of one who came not.

A distant clock chimed the hour of midnight, and a light touch on his arm aroused him. Turning, he saw the child again beside him, leaning on her crutches and regarding him with grave eyes.

“The New Year is here,” she whispered solemnly. “Come with me.”

A hand was placed over his eyes and he felt himself lifted and borne rapidly through the sharp night air that whispered of strange things to come as it whistled past him.

Presently he was set on his feet and the hand removed from his eyes. He found himself standing in

the snow outside a stately dwelling and a chime of New Year's bells rang merrily in his ears.

"Look," whispered the child.

He looked up at the mansion before him and there, in a brightly lighted window, stood a woman and a little boy. He started; for the face of the boy was his own, as it had looked so many, many years ago. In fear and trembling he raised his eyes to the face of the woman, and beheld once more the lovely eyes and gentle smile of the one being who had been dearest to him of all the world. Her hand rested on the boy's shoulder and together they listened to the bells that proclaimed the passing of the old, the coming of the new.

"Listen," whispered the child.

A loved voice, long since stilled in an eternal silence, came to him through the frosty air, repeating words he had heard so often as a child.

"Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky,
The flying cloud, the frosty light;
The year is dying in the night;
Ring out, wild bells, and let him die."

Without waiting to hear more, the man fell on his knees in the snow with a heartrending cry of "Mother!" At the sound of his voice the woman and boy disappeared, and he was alone in the cold and darkness.

Again the child's hand urged him on, and soon he stood on the bank of a rushing river. On the other side shone a bright light, and in the midst of the radiance stood the same woman with the sweet face and silvering hair. Not daring to speak, he stretched out his arms to her in silent supplication. Her face was filled with unutterable sadness as she shook her head and pointed to the black stream that ran between them. The man looked down at the turbid water and beheld hundreds of demon faces that grinned and mocked at him as they floated past and shouted to him in chorus:

"This is the river of years, and we are the evil deeds with which you have filled it."

Overcome with remorse, he bowed himself to the ground, and when next he raised his head, the river,

the faces and the bright light had all disappeared and he was alone in his old room in the tenement.

He sat up with a start and looked around. Yes, there were the same cracked walls and bare floor, and here the window through which stole the first faint beams of coming day. He was shivering with the cold, and his limbs were stiff and cramped.

"I must have been dreaming," he said as he arose, threw up the casement and watched the growing brightness in the eastern sky.

"It is the dawn of a new day, of a new year, and please God, of a new life. 'I will arise and will go to my father and will say to him: Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before thee.'"

'At that moment the sun rose, flooding the earth with a golden radiance, and the bells of the city pealed out a merry chime. The man's heart echoed that song of joy and triumph as he repeated slowly:

"Ring out the old, ring in the new,
Ring, happy bells, across the snow;
The year is going, let him go;
Ring out the false, ring in the true."

ONE THANKSGIVING EVE.

It was Thanksgiving Eve, and snowing fast. Outside, the wind raged in a fury, rocking the crazy old building to its very foundations, and shrieking with anger because the apparently tottering structure still withstood its onslaught. Inside, in that wretched garret, a fiercer, though invisible, conflict was being fought; a battle for a woman's soul. As I listened to the wind howling over the roofs and chimneys, dashing the snow and sleet against the shaking casements, and whistling through the broken panes filled in with rags and papers, it seemed to me to voice the anger of the demons who felt they were about to be cheated of their prey. Surely, the guardian angel of that struggling soul was putting forth all his strength in this combat with the powers of darkness, for gradually a softer look stole over the despairing face, and a softer tone crept into the harsh voice.

A more repulsive-looking object it would be hard to

find than the poor creature lying on the bed before me. Those who knew, said she had been beautiful as a young girl; but it seemed incredible as one looked on the red, bloated face, bleared eyes, and thin, unkempt hair. Years of dissipation had done their work well, and left only a pitiful wreck slowly dying with a lingering and painful disease. She knew she was dying, the doctor had told her so, but she would not listen to one word of religious consolation or give one thought to her immortal soul. The mere mention of a priest would drive her into a passion of anger that was fearful to behold. We had prayers without number said for her, Masses offered for her, and I felt certain God's mercy would triumph in the end.

That morning we had finished a novena in honor of the Holy Souls, and I had come to her in the evening determined that before I left she would have promised to see a priest and make her peace with God.

Thus far, she had been obdurate and her only answer to all arguments and entreaties was:

"No! No! Let me alone. God never could forgive me. Long ago I had to make my choice and now I

must abide by it. What use would God have for the like of me? He never could forgive me; 'tis impossible. You don't know what I've been or you would see that for me there is no hope left; no hope of anything in this world or the next."

For some time neither of us had spoken. The sick woman lay with closed eyes, listening to the voices of the storm; and I prayed as I had never prayed in my life, begging that grace might touch that hardened heart, and hope be sent to the despairing soul.

Then I opened a little book I had brought with me, and laying my hand on the thin, nervous fingers that restlessly wandered over the ragged bed-coverings, I said:

"Mary, I am going to read you a little story that was written many, many years ago. It is about another Mary, too, and I want you to listen very carefully."

With a silent ejaculation to our guardian angels, hers and mine, I commenced reading from the Testament that most beautiful story of Christ's mercy to sinners.

“ And one of the Pharisees desired Him to eat with him. And He went into the house of the Pharisee and sat down to meat. And behold a woman, that was in the city a sinner, when she knew that He sat at meat in the Pharisee’s house, brought an alabaster box of ointment; and standing behind at His feet, she began to wash His feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head, and kissed His feet and anointed them with the ointment. And the Pharisee, who had invited Him, seeing it, spoke within himself, saying: ‘ This man, if he were a prophet, would know surely who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth Him: that she is a sinner.’ And Jesus, answering, said to him: ‘ Simon, I have somewhat to say to thee.’ But he said: ‘ Master, say it.’ ‘ A certain creditor had two debtors, the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And whereas they had not wherewith to pay, he forgave them both. Which, therefore, of the two loveth him most?’

“ Simon, answering, said: ‘ I suppose that he to whom he forgave most.’

“ And He said to him: ‘ Thou hast judged rightly.’

“ And turning to the woman, He said unto Simon : ‘ Dost thou see this woman ? I entered into thy house, thou gavest me no water for my feet ; but she with tears hath washed my feet, and with her hair hath wiped them. Thou gavest me no kiss ; but she, since she came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint ; but she with ointment hath anointed my feet. Wherefore, I say to thee : ‘ Many sins are forgiven her because she hath loved much. But to whom less is forgiven, he loveth less.’ ”

“ And He said to the woman : ‘ Thy sins are forgiven thee : go in peace.’ ”

As I read, I felt the hand I held tremble slightly once or twice, and when I finished and looked towards the bed, her head was turned away and her face hidden on her arm. Presently, without turning around, she said slowly, and her voice broke at times with sobs she tried in vain to check :

“ Christ *was* good to that other Mary, but then she could see Him, and weep at His feet and tell Him how sorry she was. If I could only see Him and speak to Him like that, He might forgive me, too.”

"Mary, dear," I said earnestly. "You *can* speak with Him just as she did, and tell Him how sorry you are, and ask Him to forgive you. Right now, He *is* here with you in this little room just as truly as He was in the house of the Pharisee. He knows you are sorry, Mary, and is pleading with you to see His minister and receive pardon through him."

"Oh, if I only dared to hope," Mary answered. "It is such a long time since I've been to confession, such a long, sad, wicked time! I have almost forgotten what it means to say a prayer—except," she added after a pause, and as if ashamed of the admission; "except the Hail Mary. No matter what happened, I never forgot to say a Hail Mary every day. It was a promise I made my mother when she was dying, and it is a promise I have always kept."

For some moments, silence reigned in that little room, a silence broken only by the noise of the tempest without. The demon voices in the wind raged in helpless fury for they knew God's mercy had snatched a soul from their grasp in the very moment they were about to claim her for their own.

Then a voice from the bed, a voice I scarcely recognized, it was so gentle, said: "Will you please read that once more, that story of the other Mary?"

Once more I read the story, and then read on and on, all the sad, sweet history of the Passion, that wonderful story of the Innocent One who took upon Himself the burden of our sins, and suffered and died that we might live. But when I read of how there stood by the cross of Jesus, Mary, His Mother, and that other Mary whose sins had been forgiven in the house of the Pharisee, the sick woman burst into tears, exclaiming: "Oh, don't! Please don't read any more. I can't bear it! You may send for the priest and I will go to confession."

Half an hour later, gentle, kindly Father Nolan entered the room, and I retired to the landing without.

The house was one of the worst it has ever been my lot to enter. It had long since been condemned as unsafe, the walls leaned dangerously over the street, the front door had fallen away from its hinges and lay neglected in a corner, the stairs were rickety and broken, and the whole place was simply alive with rats.

Still, there were many people who were glad of even such a shelter, and who called the place home.

Mary's room was in the attic, and as I waited on the narrow, dimly-lighted landing outside her door, the din that rose from below was horrible. I wanted to pray for the poor soul making her peace with God, and I thought of Christ in the Sacrament of His love reposing in that wretched garret only a few feet away, but I could not shut out the noise of that tumult.

In one room, some great carousal in celebration of Thanksgiving was evidently in progress. Shrieks of tipsy laughter sounded through the door; coarse songs, coarser jests, and more laughter. In another room, a worn-out mother was vainly trying to hush the cries of her sickly infant, pausing at times to scream threats and curses at other children fighting among themselves instead of going to bed. From yet another quarter came sounds of an angry quarrel between a man and his wife. Words only at first, and bitter imprecations, then the noise of blows and of small articles of furniture thrown across the room. Finally, the woman ran shrieking out onto the landing and took refuge with

one of her neighbors. Ten minutes, twenty minutes, half an hour passed, and still I waited, and still the noise continued.

The little lame vestmaker who shared poor Mary's garret, toiled painfully up the stairs, pausing in surprise when she saw me. A few words of explanation and she sat on the stair beside me, leaning her head against the wall in utter weariness, then drew out her rosary and prayed silently. To her the rats that ran across our feet and scuttled away into the darkness were old acquaintances, and the noise below was too familiar to cause any distraction.

At length Father Nolan opened the door and we entered the sick-room. Here all was peace and joy, that peace which the world cannot give, and the joy the angels know over the repentant sinner. Mary received her God for the first time in many, many years, and then the consoling words of the Sacrament of Extreme Unction were spoken.

The last blessing given, the good Father gone, and Mary's thanksgiving finished, I, too, prepared to leave her for the night. I shall never forget the look of

happiness on her face as she wished me good night and said :

“ I am not afraid now, only so happy and so thankful.”

At the door I turned again to look at her as she lay with that radiant smile on her face and the crucifix in her hand. Her lips moved and I caught the words she repeated to herself: “ Many sins are forgiven her because she hath loved much.”

TERRY.

TERRY lay watching the little patch of moonlight on the opposite wall and listening to the voice of the man in the next bed, the man who was his friend. As he listened, a look of trouble crept into his great black eyes, and a feeling of awe and wonder filled his heart. Never before in his careless, roving existence, had he been brought face to face with the problem which confronted him now.

On the whole, life had gone right merrily with Terry; that is, since he had fallen in with "the gang." A jovial set they were, light-hearted, light-fingered—men, boys and even little children who lived, for the most part, by appropriating the goods of others as opportunities presented themselves. They gave little heed to the past, less to the future. "Eat, drink and be merry, for to-morrow we die," was ever the motto of "the gang."

Such were the people who had picked up Terry, a homeless waif, wandering forlorn and neglected in the streets of the great city after he had run away from the foundling asylum in which his infancy and early childhood had been spent. Of those days in the asylum, Terry could not think even now without a shudder and a sigh of pity for the miserable, half-starved, little wretches who had been his companions there. Aside from that very early experience, life had passed pleasantly enough for Terry. He was here to-day, there to-morrow; earning an honest penny if the chance offered, if not—well, there was always some pocket ready to be picked, and Terry had received an excellent training in the art of thieving. His entire education as a child had been with that end in view, to make a clever thief of him, and he had been taught nothing else.

It was only within the past few weeks, since he had been lying here on his cot in the city hospital, that he began to wonder if, after all, life might not mean something more than mere clothes and bread, and the enjoyment of what pleasures one could find along the

way. In his nineteen years of existence, Terry had met all sorts and conditions of men, but never had he known a man like this one, this friend of his in the next bed, who cared nothing for to-day and lived only for some mysterious to-morrow of which Terry had never heard. Could it be that there really was a life beyond the grave as this man said? Such a thought had never entered Terry's mind before, but he would almost like to believe that it was true.

He had become sincerely attached to this new friend, who seemed so absolutely alone in the world, deserted by all save the young priest who visited him daily. Terry was not the only one who wondered what strange chain of circumstances, what series of misfortunes, could have brought him to this pass; for voice, manner, appearance, all indicated that he was a man of education and refinement, a man who had once walked with the great ones of the earth.

It was with real grief that Terry watched, day by day and hour by hour, the slow descent into the valley of the long shadow, the gradual drifting, drifting towards the great mysterious land of eternal silence.

How would he, Terry, feel were he in this man's place? How would he feel if he knew that in a few days he must face that dread moment which to him would mean the end of all things? How was it that his friend could face it so calmly, nay, with such joy, such absolute certainty of a happy future?

What was it his friend's voice was saying? It was faint and very low, a mere whisper, but every word came distinctly to Terry's ears.

"It is almost the end now, Terry, almost the end. But a little while and I shall have left this vale of tears and entered into the beautiful life beyond. It seems good, boy, almost too good to be true. I have lain here day after day, and night after night, just waiting, waiting. I have watched the sun rise and the sun set. I have seen that little patch of moonlight come and go upon the wall, and I have cried: 'How long, Lord, how long.'

"I have been glad when that bit of moonlight was there on the wall, Terry, because it always shows me pictures, such beautiful pictures, of One Whom I love, One Who has loved me 'even unto death,' the Friend

I journey to meet. The pictures are ever varying, the scenes ever shifting, but my Friend is always there, always.

“ Sometimes I see Him as a little baby, a tiny helpless child, shivering with cold in the manger on the hillside. The city gates were closed against Him and He had not whereon to lay His head. He came unto His own and His own received Him not, but there on the lonely hillside He made His first home with none to bid Him welcome but the ox, and the ass, and the lowly shepherds.

“ Again, I see Him as a Child in the humble home at Nazareth. It is evening and Mary stands at the door and shades her eyes from the setting sun as she watches the road for the return of her dear ones. Presently they appear, Joseph and the Boy, and a smile of joy illumines the Mother’s face as she watches them approach. The Child sees her and runs forward to show her some little gift He has made for her, and to recount to her the story of His day’s toil under the guidance of His foster-father. Mary smiles again as she watches the eager face, but though the smile is on

her lips, there is sadness in her heart. She holds the tiny hand in hers and kisses it fondly and even then a vision comes to her of how she will one day see that hand, nailed to the cross on Calvary's heights, all torn, and bruised, and bleeding, and all her mother's love powerless to save Him.

"Another picture I sometimes see is of the Man, grown beautiful beyond description, all gentle, all kind, all merciful. He leaves the little home in Nazareth, leaves that loving Mother, and goes forth to minister to the sons of men. He walks among them in friendship and in kindness. He heals the sick, He makes the blind to see, the dumb to speak, and the lame to walk; He raises up the dead to life again, and turns sorrow into joy. Wherever He goes, He showers blessings and benefits on all around, on the just and the unjust, the sinner and the saint.

"Yet a day comes when He stands before His judge on trial for His life and not one voice is raised in His behalf. He had given health and happiness to so many, He had gone about doing good to all and harm to none; yet in His hour of need He is alone and

friendless. Not one steps forward to plead for Him. Instead, they cry aloud with one voice: 'Crucify Him! crucify Him!' And Pilate says to them: 'Why, what evil hath He done?' But they cry out the more: 'Crucify Him!'

"Another picture I see, terrible beyond the power of words to depict. It is not yet three hours after noonday, but the sun has veiled his face in horror, and a midnight blackness creeps slowly over the earth. On the top of a steep and rocky hill, called Golgotha, outlined against the darkening sky, stand three crosses. On one, He hangs, slowly dying in awful agony; dying for you, Terry, dying for me, dying that we may live with Him forever.

"Around His cross stands a great crowd of people who have followed, hooting and jeering, as His poor, tortured form struggled up the rocky hillside. They stand now in silence, the silence of fear and dread, as they see noonday turning slowly to midnight. For three long hours He has hung there in torment, but even now His thoughts are all for others, never for Himself. Even now He seeks to perform one last

work of kindness and mercy, to bring one more soul to know Him and to love Him. His words are words of pity and forgiveness as He turns to one who is dying with Him, one who is suffering justly for his crimes, a thief, a malefactor. 'Amen, I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise.'

"As I look on this scene, Terry, I can almost fancy that He turns to me also and repeats that blessed promise: 'This day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise.'

"There is one more picture, boy, the last and a beautiful one. I see Him standing in a cloud of glory and His face does shine as the sun, and His garments are whiter than snow. He is coming towards me and is regarding me with eyes of heavenly love and compassion. I see the wounds in His hands and feet and in His sacred side, and from those wounds comes forth a radiance that seems to fill the room and lift me up on a sea of joy and gladness. I know it is thus He will come to meet me at the end; it is thus I shall see Him waiting for me at the gates of Paradise.

"I will not fear at His coming,
Although I must meet Him alone;
He will look in my eyes so gently
And take my hand in His own.

"Like a dream, all my toil will vanish,
When I lay my head on His breast;
But the journey is very weary,
And He only can give me rest."

Gradually the whispering voice trailed away into silence and Terry knew that his friend slept. One by one the moments passed, one by one the hours were chimed by the clock in a neighboring belfry; still Terry lay gazing with wondering, wistful eyes on the little patch of moonlight as it crept slowly, steadily, along the opposite wall.

* * * * *

Weak and pale from his recent illness, Terry went along the familiar streets. It was good to be out once more in the blessed sunshine, good to be faring back to the old life, the old haunts and the old friends. He could already feel the clasp of eager hands, he could picture the joyous welcome he would receive; for Terry was a prime favorite with every member of

"the gang." He had never realized before what a strong hold the merry, adventurous life had upon him, and he threw back his head and laughed aloud for sheer joy that he was returning to it. Yes, he was going back to the life he loved, to the men who were his friends, to the young boys who looked up to him with ardent admiration, and whose one ambition was to become even as he was, the lightest fingered, the fleetest of foot, in short, the cleverest thief of the gang.

As he walked, he thrust his hand deep into his pocket and his fingers came in contact with a tiny bit of paste-board. Slowly, he drew it out and looked at it, and as he looked a great change came over the joyous countenance. On that little card a few words were written, simply a name and an address, but they recalled to Terry's mind the promise he had given that friend of his in the hospital. It was just a week now since Terry had seen his friend's eyes close in the last, long sleep, close so peacefully, so sweetly. Just a week ago, the bed next his own had been left vacant and the man who had been his companion during weeks of illness

and pain had passed beyond the reach of all trouble and all suffering.

Shortly before the end, Terry had given the promise that rose before him now and stood between him and the merry life to which he was returning. He had promised faithfully never to go back to "the gang," the friends he had loved since childhood; to leave behind him forever the only life he had ever known, the life of the professional pickpocket. The dying man had given him the little card he now held, and on it was written the address of the young priest whom Terry had seen in constant attendance at his friend's bedside.

"Terry," the dying voice had whispered faintly, "never go back to them, lad, those men who have made you what you are. No matter how it may call to you, don't ever go back to your life of thieving and wrong-doing. As soon as you leave this place, go to him, the good priest you have seen here day after day. He will put you in the way of earning an honest living; he has promised me he would. Better still, he will teach you to know and love the only Being Whose

love is worth striving for. He will teach you to live, Terry, so that when the day comes to you as it has come to me, when you are about to leave that life behind you, you will be able to face the end without trembling and without fear. I am going fast, Terry, going fast. Promise me, boy, before I go."

And Terry had promised.

That was a week ago and here he was now on his way back to the life he had promised to renounce forever. In a few moments he would be with "the gang," clasping friendly hands, listening to words of welcome. Just there, at the next corner, he must turn to the right and three minutes walk would bring him to them. As he neared the corner, almost unconsciously his slow steps became even slower. The corner was reached and he stood looking long and earnestly at the card in his hand. The address on it was one that would take him far over to the other side of the city, while here to the right, not many yards away, lay home, and friends, and happiness. But could he be happy with them now? Could he be content even, with all these new doubts and fears, and

hopes running riot in his brain? He looked down the familiar street, his glance passing from one well-known object to another. The houses, the stores, the very pavements seemed like old friends beckoning him back to them. The old life called to him with a call he could scarce resist; old ties, old friendships, old associations drew him slowly, slowly back to them. He half turned to the right as if to obey that call, then once more looked at the card in his hand. His mind flew back to the hospital, back to that last night when he had watched the little patch of moonlight on the wall and listened to the whispering voice of the man in the next bed:

“ Pictures, Terry, pictures of the Friend I journey to meet.”

“ Dying in awful agony, dying for you, Terry, dying for me, dying that we may live with Him forever.”

“ I am going fast, going fast. Promise me, boy, before I go.”

A moment more of doubt and hesitation, then his reluctant feet took the turning to the left, the road

that led to the other side of the city. 'As he walked slowly along, Terry whispered to himself:

“ A promise is a promise, I suppose, an' somehow I'd like to learn more of that Friend what he was always talkin' about. I'd kinder like to think as how He'd come to me at the end as He came to him. Yes' I'd like to learn how to die as he did. Reckon I'd better go an' look up the parson chap, after all,

"GREATER LOVE NO MAN HATH."

It was the Feast of the Sacred Heart. It was also the Benediction hour in the little church of Our Lady of Sorrows, which stands in the heart of one of the poorest sections of the city. A glance at the congregation assembled there on that evening in June was sufficient to show that the title of the church had not been bestowed at random. These were people in whose lives sorrow and want held the largest share. Many a weary soul and breaking heart came to that little church to seek the comfort they knew could be given only by One who said: "Come to Me, all you that labor and are heavy burdened."

To Him, then, they came, to find healing and strength; healing for the aching hearts and weary spirits that longed to lay the burden down; strength

to lift it once more and, going forth, to tread bravely the road they must travel; "the royal road of the cross."

Many such were gathered there to attend the Benediction on that Feast of the Sacred Heart, but among them all, probably the most sorrowing was a girl who knelt in a deserted corner apart from the rest of the congregation. Her daily life was as the lives of the majority of the girls in that neighborhood: up at early dawn and away to a hard day's work in the laundry; home late at night to the little room in the attic where she lived alone now that her sister was gone and her heartbroken mother at rest in God's Acre. It was of that sister she was thinking now, and for her she was praying with bitter, bitter tears. Where was she to-night, the dearly loved little sister who had so often, in days gone by, knelt with her, in that very church? Where was she to-night, the girl with the dark eyes and beautiful, discontented face who had wearied of the daily round of toil and sought refuge in a life of gayety and dissipation? Where was she to-night, she who had brought her mother's

gray head in sorrow to the grave and for whom her sister prayed so earnestly?

The *O Salutaris* was sung and the *Tantum Ergo*, but the girl kneeling with bowed head scarcely heard the tones of the organ or the voices of the singers. Her soul was in a tumult, almost of despair. Had she not prayed; had she not fasted and borne her daily trials without murmur or complaint? Had she not pinched and denied herself in order to give of her scanty means to those even poorer than she? All, all, to obtain the one object of her life, that her sister might return to God and to her. For five years, five long, weary years, she had hoped and prayed, but as yet had heard nothing from the wandering one. Would God always turn a deaf ear to her pleadings? What was there she had not done and could do to make Him listen to her prayers?

The voices of organ and singers were still and a hush fell on the little congregation, a hush broken by the silvery tinkle of the bell as the blessing of Christ Himself descended on the worshippers. At that instant, a sudden thought flashed through the girl's

mind. Yes, there was one thing more that she could do, one further sacrifice she could make, and surely, *then*, God would listen to her. She would offer herself for her sister's salvation."

With eyes fastened on the little golden door behind which the Prisoner of Love was again resting, she cried to Him in her heart :

"Oh! God of Love and pity, take me and do with me what Thou wilt. Send me sickness, pain, suffering, death even, if it be Thy wish, only bring my sister back to Thy love and Thy grace. I offer Thee all that I am, all that I have, even my life, in exchange for my sister's salvation."

Once more she bowed her head in silent prayer, but now no tears fell and all was peace within. God would grant her prayer in His Own good time, of that she felt certain.

"With echoing steps the worshippers
Departed one by one ;
The organ's pealing voice was stilled,
The vesper hymn was done ;
The shadows fell from roof and arch,
Dim was the incensed air,—

But peace went with her as she left
The sacred Presence there."

* * * * *

Again it was the Feast of the Sacred Heart and the sunset hour was approaching. For the second time that day, I mounted the stairs of the tenement house, four flights of narrow, crooked stairs, to the tiny room beneath the roof where my little friend lay dying. Her long years of toil were over and soon this last year of great suffering would be over too. I had often wondered at her gentle patience and at the smile with which she welcomed each new pain. Then she told me the story of her sister and of that Benediction service on the last Feast of the Sacred Heart, and I wondered no longer. To her, her illness and her sufferings were simply an assurance that God had accepted her offering and would bring her sister back to her and to a life of grace. And Alice, the sister, had come back to her, though still apparently as far from God as ever. I was sitting with her that wild afternoon in the winter when Alice had returned. Her beauty marred, and condemned to walk the remainder of her

life with a limping gait as the result of an accident, her heart rose up in hot rebellion against the fate that had so maimed her. Even the sight of her patient sister's suffering did not soften her; on the contrary, it seemed to make her more bitter and rebellious. She would sit for hours staring into space and brooding in sullen silence, then throw on her hat and jacket and leave the house to seek her one unfailing solace—drink.

One day, as the sick girl slept, I told Alice of that loving sister's patient devotion, of the long years of prayer and sacrifice and of that final grand renunciation. I pleaded with her as earnestly as I could to make her dying sister's last days happy by becoming reconciled to the Master Whose every command she had broken and yet Who loved her well enough to die for her. Her only answer was to rise quickly from her chair and leave the room, and for some days after, she was worse than ever. Then I noticed that she was gradually drinking less and her manner to her sister was more gentle. At last, my little friend told me that Alice had gone back to the laundry to the place she

had left vacant so long ago. The girl smiled as she added: "That is one step in the right direction. God is very good and will bring her back to Him some day. I know He will, oh! I know He will."

I was thinking of all this as I mounted the stairs that June evening and entered the room beneath the sun-baked roof. The air was stifling, and the girl's bed was drawn close to the one narrow window that she might watch the sun set behind the chimneys of factories and tenement houses. I took her hand silently and watched with her. As we looked, the departing sun sent forth one final shaft of golden light which rested for a moment gently and lovingly on the face on the pillow.

"That is a parting smile from the West," she said softly; "God's smile from Heaven."

The radiance slowly died from the sky and the shadows of night came creeping over the earth.

"The sun has set and night is coming," said the girl. "Soon, for me, there will be no sunset and no night; nothing but day, a bright, glorious, eternal day."

As I looked at her, I knew she spoke truly; a few short hours more and she would surely stand in the presence of her Maker. She had received Holy Communion that morning, also the Sacrament of Extreme Unction. On her face was a look of ineffable happiness as she turned to me, saying:

“This has been such a beautiful day for me, such a happy, blessed day. God is so good to us, so good and kind and loving if we only trust Him.”

A few moments later, she fell into a quiet sleep, and Alice and I, watching, saw her smile in her sleep and heard her murmur once more: “God is good.”

I wondered then, and I wonder now, if it was given to her to know what really happened a few months afterwards. I wonder if she saw the stately house of God packed to the doors with a vast throng that had gathered to hear the sermon on the last night of a mission. I wonder if she saw the woman who limped aimlessly along the street, going she knew not whither and caring not. I wonder if she saw that woman stop and listen as the sound of music floated out to her from within, hesitate for a few moments, then, as if

drawn by some irresistible force, limp slowly up the steps and steal into a corner, half ashamed of being there. I wonder if she could have heard the sermon that night, delivered by one of the most celebrated preachers of the day. The wonderful, thrilling voice pierced to the very souls of that multitude as it spoke to them of the undying love of the Crucified, of His thirst for souls, of His agony, His sufferings and His death for us and for our sins. Many a hardened heart was touched that night and many a repentant tear was shed as the pleading voice urged all who might yet be wandering in the paths of sin to return to God and throw themselves on the mercy of that Sacred Heart, broken by their ingratitude and pierced by their sins, yet loving them still. I wonder if she could have seen, a little later when the service was over, a woman leave one of the confessionals and prostrate herself in the dim church before the altar on which "one lamp alone, with trembling ray, told of the Presence there." I wonder if she could have beheld that woman's face as she raised it to gaze on the tabernacle door. It was the face of her sister Alice, no longer discontented,

sullen or rebellious, but filled with a peaceful happiness which God alone can give. I wonder if the dying girl could have seen all this and was that why she smiled in her slumber and murmured: "God is good."

Those were the last words she spoke in this world, for, from that quiet sleep, she passed into the long last sleep from which there is no awaking.

As I stood beside her couch next morning looking on the lifeless face which still wore that happy smile, and then on the figure of Alice kneeling beside the bed, Alice for whom she had given her life, half unconsciously I spoke aloud the words that were in my mind:

"Greater love than this no man hath; that he lay down his life for his friend."

For answer, the kneeling girl crouched still lower and hid her face in the coverlet.

I could almost fancy that I saw the lifeless lips move and heard once more the gentle voice repeating:

"God is good, oh! so good and kind and loving if we only trust Him."

TATTERS.

TATTERS, they called him, and surely never was name more fittingly bestowed. From the top of his tousled head to the dilapidated shoes through which bare toes were peeping, he was literally "a thing of shreds and patches." The night was bitterly cold and Tatters, lying on his mattress in the corner, tried to draw more closely around him the ragged shawl which was his only bed covering. He wished he dared move nearer to the stove in which a small fire burned smokily, but fear prevented him; fear of the old woman who sat close to the fitful blaze, smoking her pipe and pausing now and then to drink from the bottle which stood on the floor at her side.

She was cross to-night, terribly cross. Business had not prospered that day, her business of professional begging, and at such times she usually vented her anger on the child. Young as he was, he had learned

from sad experience when it was wisest to creep away into his corner without waiting for supper and lie there as quietly as possible in the hope that she might forget his existence. She was not his grandmother, although she obliged him to call her so and forced him to accompany her on her rounds.

From door to door they would go, begging an alms, and many who would have refused the woman opened their purses readily when they beheld the pale, wistful face of the child. Many a time had she chuckled gleefully and congratulated herself on her wisdom in taking possession of the boy that morning the neighbors had found him crying beside the lifeless body of his mother. In fact, she had had her eyes on him long before that, and watched the weary, worn-out mother failing day by day and laid her plans accordingly. She knew the boy would prove of great value to her in her trade of begging and a child like that would not cost much to keep. Clothes could be picked up for him almost anywhere, or begged perhaps, and he need not eat much. It would be better not to feed him too well; a plump child would not excite as much pity as a thin,

sickly one. Poor little Tatters was thin enough to suit even her, for not once during the seven years of his small existence had he known what it was to be properly clothed or properly fed. To him, as to so many like him, life had spelled hunger and misery; home had been the cellar of a tenement house where he and his small brother and sister huddled together to keep from freezing in winter and lay gasping for breath on sweltering summer nights. To him, as to many others, father was a being to be dreaded, a creature, more brute than man, who reeled home night after night, abused and beat his wife and cursed his unfortunate children; mother was a pale, heavy-eyed woman whose days were one dreary round of seeking for work whereby she might earn bread for her hungry little ones. Sometimes she found odd jobs to do, but more frequently turned sadly away, the same reply ringing in her ears:

“More people now than we know what to do with; could not possibly take on another.” Always the same cry; so many people looking for work, so little work to give them.

Of these struggles, Tatters had been but dimly aware. Mother would go out in the morning leaving him to care for the little brother and sister and to watch anxiously for her return. Sometimes, she would not come home until the dusk had fallen and then they were pretty sure to have bread and potatoes and occasionally even bacon for supper. At other times, she would return in the early afternoon perhaps, exhausted and discouraged, and would fling herself face downward on the bed in the utter abandonment of despair. On such occasions, the children crept away into a corner and cried themselves to sleep, knowing full well there would be no supper for them that night.

Though never demonstrative, mother had always been kind to Tatters, especially since that day when men had come in a big covered wagon and taken away the little brother and sister. Tatters never saw them again and often wondered where they were and why they were taken and he left behind. Of course, he would not like to leave mother, but it was so terribly lonesome after that when she would be out looking

for work and he left all alone. He had heard a neighbor say something about doctors, hospital, and scarlet fever and wondered what it all meant. He asked mother where the children were and she had answered:

“Gone to Heaven, child, and may God forgive me but it’s hard to keep from wishing that you and I were with them.”

It was of those words he was thinking as he lay in the corner that cold, cold night and watched the old woman at the fire. Where was Heaven and how could one reach it? He wished he knew where to find the road that led there, for mother had gone to heaven, too. At least, Maggie Dolan said she had, big, kind Maggie Dolan who had taken him in her arms and cried over him, and comforted him that dreadful morning when he had awakened to find mother lying so still and white and cold. Oh! how cold and still she was and he could not make her speak to him, though he knew she was not asleep. Her eyes were open, wide open, so of course she was not sleeping. He could feel now something of the terror that

had assailed him and caused the agonizing screams which brought the neighbors in haste to the cellar room. He remembered hearing someone exclaim: "Poor creature! Dead as she can be. Starvation no doubt."

A voice, dull with despair, replied to the first speaker:

"Sure, it's better off she is, an' there's more of us will be goin' the same way before long, I'm thinkin',"

Tatters had stared from one to another, stared in frightened wonder, until he felt Maggie's arms around him, and Maggie's tears upon his face. He leaned his head on the kindly shoulder and sobbed his little heart out and then it was that Maggie had talked to him of Heaven and told him that mother had gone there. A wonderful place it must be if all she said were true, a marvellous place indeed, where one was never cold and never hungry. He did wish he had asked her how he could get there, for surely mother never meant to leave him behind. It was strange she should have forgotten to take him and he knew she must have felt bad when she reached Heaven and

remembered that her little boy was left behind. Yes, he wished he had asked Maggie to show him the way to Heaven, but then, he really had not had time to ask her. The angry voice of her husband on the stairs, loudly demanding his breakfast, made her leave Tatters in a hurry. The ugly bruise on her forehead explained why she jumped to obey that voice. Then the old woman had taken him away with her and had kept him ever since. Sometimes he wondered idly what had become of father. Had he gone to Heaven, too? Tatters really hoped he had not, for father used to beat mother and they were always glad when he did not come home. Sometimes, he had been away for weeks at a time and mother and Tatters were almost happy then in spite of cold and hunger.

The old woman by the fire was dozing, her pipe had gone out and the fire flickered low. A sputtering from the one candle roused her, warning her that it, too, had burned down and would soon be out, leaving the room in darkness.

Unsteadily, and with muttered imprecations at the rheumatism which had stiffened her joints, she got

upon her feet. Then, wrapping a ragged patchwork quilt about her, she threw herself upon her bed and was soon sleeping audibly.

The candle flared up for a second, then went out, and still the child lay thinking. A plan had been gradually taking shape in his mind, a plan which he was now determined to carry out. He would stay no longer with this terrible old woman, to be starved and beaten and dragged around the streets in all kinds of weather until every bone in his little body ached with fatigue. He would watch all night and as soon as the first ray of dawn peeped in through the cracked window panes, he would steal away and search until he found the road that led to Heaven and mother. He would like to start at once, but he might miss the way in the dark; better wait until daylight. Knowing that he was safe now from observation, he slipped his hand under the mattress and drew out the only thing he had left which had belonged to mother. He always kept it hidden, for he knew if the old woman saw it she would take it from him. To Tatters, it was only a string of ugly black beads with a broken cross at-

tached, but mother had seemed fond of it and he thought she would like to have it again. The cross, Tatters understood; mother had told him all about it. He thought now of the day he had first noticed that little cross. The beads were in her hand and he, a little child of four leaning against her knee, picked up the crucifix, examining it curiously. With wondering eyes he held it up to her, asking in awe-struck tones:

“What did they do that to that Man for?”

Mother was crying with her face hidden on one arm on the table and did not hear the question until he had repeated it. Then she lifted him onto her knee and told him the story of the Cross. He could not understand it all, but one thing he did remember. It was God who died on the Cross and mother said God was in Heaven now. She had said, too, that if little boys prayed hard enough to Him, He would give them anything they asked. Tatters had often asked God to send them food when he and mother had been so hungry, and almost always food had come. A kind neighbor would take pity on them or mother would find a little work and earn some money. Still, there

had been days when he prayed for bread and none came, like that time when mother went to Heaven, but he supposed he had not prayed hard enough. He would pray hard now, just as hard as ever he could, and then God would help him in his search and show him the road that leads to Heaven.

All night the child lay holding the small crucifix and praying with all his heart. His prayer was a simple one, but oft repeated:

“Dear, good God, please show me the way.”

Gradually, a feeling of happiness such as he had never known stole over him, and with the first signs of approaching dawn, he rose from his mattress, firmly convinced that before long he would have found the road he sought.

Stealing softly from the room without disturbing the sleeping woman, he was soon on the street speeding away as fast as his small legs would carry him. His one idea at first was to put as great a distance as possible between him and the old woman he had left. He wanted to avoid any chance of being found by her and taken back to his life of begging. On and on

he ran until at last he was obliged to pause for breath and then proceed more slowly. He looked around carefully and was quite sure he had never seen these streets before, so he felt pretty safe from pursuit. He could now begin his search for the road to Heaven, but where was he to look? He would like to ask someone, but was afraid. He watched the people as they hurried past him too intent on their own affairs to notice the wistful face of poor little Tatters. He approached one or two persons, but they, thinking he was about to ask for money, shook their heads and hastened on.

The beads were twined around his wrist with the little cross hidden in the palm of his hand, and he kept repeating to himself: "Oh! dear, good God, show me the way, please show me the way." All day long he tramped the streets, and all day his little heart was crying: "O God, show me the way."

Evening was approaching and he was faint and weary and could scarce see where he was going. Still, that pitiful plea went up to Heaven: "Dear God, show me the way." The streets had become more and

more crowded and now he was in the midst of a bustling throng. People pushed against and jostled him as they passed, teams blocked the roadways and policemen shouted at him when he tried to cross. He was moving now almost mechanically and once or twice he staggered and leaned against the buildings for support. He was dimly aware that it was growing dark and that lights were appearing in the shop windows. He had long ago ceased to feel the cold, and, somehow, he was no longer hungry; only so tired, so very tired. Still, he must keep on for God would surely show him the way soon.

Suddenly the air was filled with startled cries as a runaway horse dashed madly through that crowded thoroughfare. Teams were drawn quickly to one side to let him pass and those pedestrians who were crossing the street fled for safety to the sidewalk; all except one, a small, ragged figure that stood, as if dazed, directly in the path of the on-coming horse. A warning shout, a clatter of flying hoofs and the runaway had turned the corner and was gone.

Kind hands raised the little form and bore it gently

into a nearby store; pitying faces bent over him looking anxiously for some sign of returning consciousness, but their kindness and their pity came too late. A few hours earlier it would have meant so much to the lonely child; now he wanted it not.

One man touched softly the pale, thin cheek and said in unsteady voice:

“Poor little chap! What he must have suffered! Starved, simply starved;” and looked questioningly at the doctor who had just finished his examination. The latter shook his head and said sadly: “Dead, poor waif, and living and dying thus around us every day with none to care and none to help them.”

A lady, gowned in costly furs, sobbed audibly, and tears filled every eye at the doctor's words.

But the child lay white and peaceful, the little hand still clasping the crucifix and the baby lips curved in a smile of absolute happiness. God had shown him the way and Tatters was safe with mother.

OUT OF THE DEPTHS.

CHRISTMAS had dawned clear and bright, a perfect day. The blue sky seemed to laugh in joy, the sunbeams danced merrily over sparkling snow, and all nature united in proclaiming the glad tidings of the coming of One Who brought peace on earth, and good-will to men. Silver-tongued church bells rang out a joyous peal as they summoned the Christian world to join in their song of thanksgiving and of praise. Carriages rolled swiftly along broad avenues bearing richly gowned occupants to various houses of worship; pedestrians hastened towards the same goal, stopping now and then to exchange Christmas greetings with acquaintances they met on the way. In hundreds of homes, happy children sported with wonderful new toys and games, and fond parents looked on rejoicing in the pleasure of their little ones. Among that merry throng possibly one or two may have won-

dered if in all the great wide world there could be found even one spot which the spirit of Christmas had not made glad and beautiful.

Yet, not half an hour's walk from those happy homes, broad avenues and magnificent churches, lies Harmony Court. Why Harmony I never could tell; for a more inharmonious, unsavory neighborhood it would be hard to find. It is one of those wretched holes which are hidden in the very heart of our great cities and which seem to draw to themselves all the sin and want and misery of humanity. Even the bright Christmas sunshine grew pale as it looked into Harmony Court, and the peal of the church bells came only as a far-away echo from some happy but unknown world. Here can be found the halt, the blind and the lame; and here live side by side the sinner and the saint; the criminal hiding from justice, and the poor little factory "hand" struggling to earn a miserable pittance to keep together the souls and bodies of an invalid mother and small brothers and sisters.

In a cellar in Harmony Court a man lay dying,

alone and neglected, on that beautiful Christmas morning. It was there we had found him, locked in by his wife, who had gone away the night before to forget her troubles in the nearest saloon. She must have succeeded in forgetting them, for the poor, dying man was alone, without food, without even a drink of water, and, worst of all, without anyone to bring him spiritual strength to face the last dread moment. The cellar was one of those which have no communication with the house above and are reached through a door at the foot of three steps leading from the street. That door was locked; so we were obliged to enter through a window that gave onto an alley in the rear of the house—an easy feat that for twelve-year-old Johnnie, who had brought me to the place, but unfortunately my education was sadly neglected along those lines. In the dear convent we were carefully drilled in various branches of deportment, but it was not considered necessary to teach us how to descend into a cellar by climbing through a rear window.

'And such a cellar as that was! The first impression was one of utter darkness, simply reeking with the

odor of mould and dampness. As our eyes grew accustomed to the dim light, we could discern the figure of a man lying on a pile of rags in one corner; a gaunt, emaciated figure with hollow cheeks and sunken eyes. The only sign of life was the faint, irregular breathing; and as we knelt beside him the terrible fear assailed me that perhaps after all we had come too late. His hands were icy cold, and it was a wonder that he had not frozen to death. The atmosphere of the place sent a chill to one's very heart; Johnnie and I shivered even in our warm winter garments. There was a stove in the room and a few sticks of firewood (picked up only Heaven knew where), and Johnnie set to work on those while I administered restoratives to our sick man.

Presently our efforts were rewarded, for his eyes opened for a moment, then closed again wearily, as if even that small exertion had been too much for him. Around his neck was a much worn, much knotted brown string, evidently a scapular string, and I knew he must be a Catholic. Johnnie had succeeded in coaxing a small fire into life, so I despatched him for

a priest and for some one to break open that door, then prepared to keep watch beside the dying man.

With the exception of the stove (such as it was), the room contained no furniture, not even a bed. The floor was the bare earth and was moist and slippery, and from the brick walls oozed great drops of dampness which trickled slowly down to meet the moisture of the floor. One would not want a dog to live in such a hole, yet here lay a human being with no companion but his own misery, and nothing between him and the damp ground but a pile of ragged clothing. I thought of the hours, the days, perhaps the weeks that he had lain there on that pile of rags, his life slowly ebbing away, with none to care for him except a wife who spent most of her time in the saloons. How he had lived was a mystery known only to the God Who had made him and Who had not deserted him in his hour of direst need. It seemed inconceivable that a man could sink to such depths of misery and still support the burden of a life that must be almost unbearable.

Twice I arose to mend the fire and twice returned to my vigil by the bed of rags. Each second appeared to

be an hour sitting on the damp ground of that awful place, locked in with a poor wretch whose every moment seemed almost the last. The feeble warmth from the fire and the stimulants I had given him revived him considerably, but he was very weak and his breath came in short, quick gasps, broken occasionally by a racking cough. Still, he was perfectly conscious, for when I told him a priest had been sent for, a slight movement of his head signified that he understood. Then I drew out my rosary and recited the prayers aloud, choosing the sorrowful mysteries even though it was Christmas Day. Somehow, none others seemed suited to the pathos of that deathbed in a cellar. Presently a tear stole from under the closed lids, then another, and rolled slowly down the wasted cheeks. He tried to raise his hand to brush them away, but was too weak to do so. Seeing the effort and pitying him, I leaned over to dry the tears, and asked: "What is it, my friend? Can I do anything for you?"

Slowly the eyes opened and a voice, oh! so faint and weak and halting, whispered huskily:

"You set me thinking about a time long ago when I

was a boy. I lived far away from here in a happy home. Every night mother said the beads, and we all joined in the answers. I have not been inside a church for more than twenty years. I had forgotten how to pray, but your voice made me think of mother and brought it all back."

A spasm of coughing interrupted him, and when it was over he lay for some time gasping for breath. Then, once more he commenced to speak, and persisted in keeping on despite my efforts to stop him. I did not want him to talk, as it would only waste the little strength he had. Still I could do nothing but sit in silence and listen to the faint, whispering voice as he rambled on, with many pauses for breath and a few fits of coughing. His talk was of that far-away, happy boyhood on the farm, then of his coming to the city in search of fame and fortune; of his struggles and trials and temptations, and at last of his utter defeat in the battle of life. He had found the fight too hard, had given up trying, and gone down and down into the depths of misery and despair.

It was a terrible story to listen to, and yet I could

not but think of how, through all the years of wretchedness and sin, a merciful God had ever watched over the wanderer and now sent him this final chance of salvation.

At last the voice was still, and for a space silence filled the room. Then he asked me to "Please say the beads again," and this time he joined faintly in the responses. We had only reached the second decade, however, when Johnnie came back and our prison door was opened, letting in the blessed light of day. With him came also my little friend the factory girl, and we set to work to prepare for the coming of the priest. The girl's home was in a tenement half-way down the court, and she and Johnnie quickly brought over the few things necessary. In a short while the Father had arrived, and we three were standing in the street outside while the sick man made his confession.

A little later we knelt on the cellar floor to witness a scene I shall never forget. The light from the candles cast fantastic shadows that danced and flickered over the reeking walls and muddy floor, over the man lying on his bed of rags, and over the form of the

priest as he bent in adoration before the table on which reposed the Body of his Lord. As we commenced the *Confiteor*, the door swung open and the figure of a woman stood on the threshold; a wild, ragged, disheveled figure, but still a woman. One dirty, claw-like hand brushed the straggling hair from her face and the other clutched a ragged shawl closer around her neck as she stood and surveyed the room with a dull, uncomprehending stare. Then some dim understanding of what was going forward seemed to penetrate that benumbed brain, for at the *mea culpa* she fell on her knees, crouching to the floor and hiding her face in her shawl. She had left the door open and a stray ray of sunshine peeped in timidly, then she trembled across the floor and lay prostrate at the feet of the priest as he turned to face us with the Sacred Host in his hand.

“*Ecce Agnus Dei!*”

Yes, behold Him the Wonderful One, the All-Powerful, come even to this lowly cellar to claim once more for His own this child of His love who was lost but is found again.

“*Ecce! Ecce! Ecce!*” faintly echoed the distant

church bells. "Behold Him in the golden tabernacle upon your altars waiting for you to come to Him! Behold Him going forth into the highways and by-ways, into palaces and garrets and cellars, to seek those of you who will not or cannot come to Him! Behold His love which is as boundless as the sea, and His mercy, which endureth forever! Behold, and marvel, oh, ye children of men!"

GRANNY.

GRANNY DESMOND was supremely happy. She sang all day over her wash-tubs, stopping occasionally to laugh softly to herself or to open the door into the chamber where her daughter lay, and call gaily: "Didn't I tell ye so, alanna? I knew we'd make a man of him yet. Shure, an' it's Captain Desmond he'll be by the toime he comes home."

Thirty years before, Granny Desmond had left the little home in Ireland where she had spent so many years of peace and happiness, and had come to America with her son and his pretty young wife. John was a good son, a good husband, and an honest, faithful workman. While he lived, the days had been all sunshine for Granny and for Mollie and the little one. Then came the dark time after John was taken away, when the two lonely women worked and struggled to keep themselves and baby John. Mollie found a place in a factory, where she toiled from early morning until

evening, in close stifling rooms, until the pretty girl John had married became a thin pale woman, who looked twice as old as she really was. Granny "took in washing," kept the house and minded the baby.

The one ambition, which the two women had most at heart, was to see little John grow up to be a man like his father, as kind and whole-souled, and as upright. They watched with anxious eyes and dim forebodings as the child grew into the boy, and the boy into early manhood. Tall, straight and handsome, he was a figure to bring pride and joy to the face of any mother. Kind-hearted and good-natured he was too, though he was not by any means a stranger to the weaknesses and indiscretions that commonly go with those amiable qualities; for it was that very easy-going good-nature that promised to be his undoing.

Granny would often say to him: "John, my laddie, ye've one great fault that's goin' to make throuble for ye. Ye can niver say no to anyone, and when the ould boy walks up to ye some foine day wid a shmile on his face and offers ye a grand timplation, shure ye won't be able to say no to him either."

Granny was right in her prophecy, for when temptation offered, in the form of merry companions, cards and drinking, John could not find it in his heart to say no. By degrees he sank into a common street-loafer and habitu   of the bar-rooms.

Many a night would poor Mollie come home, worn out by her day's work, only to spend the greater part of the night weeping and praying for her unfortunate boy. In vain Granny tried to cheer her, saying over and over with a faith and sympathy that were truly touching: "Don't fret so, acushla! John's boy cannot be all bad intoirely, and the Sacred Heart will listen to our prayers some day. Wid the Lord's help we'll make a man of him yet."

There was a little picture of the Sacred Heart in Mollie's room, and Granny kept a light burning always before it. Many an hour the two women spent pleading to that loving Heart for the erring boy who was so dear to them. Even though, as time went on, he seemed to go from bad to worse, they simply redoubled their prayers and trusted always in the Sacred Heart.

Then came that dreadful day when John was sent to prison. Some shop had been broken into, a safe robbed, and the night watchman severely injured. Suspicion had fastened itself on John, circumstantial evidence brought conviction, and John was sentenced to prison.

Mollie failed steadily after that, though she continued her work at the factory, and tried hard to be cheerful at home for the sake of the dear old lady, whose heart, she could see, was breaking. Even that misfortune, however, did not extinguish the well-sheltered flame of Granny's faith. She still prayed and hoped, and, with a buoyancy that had hitherto tided her over many a depressing storm, said to her daughter: "Don't lose heart, Mollie darlin'. He'll be out some day, and we'll make a man of him yet."

Finally, the day arrived when he was "out" again, and no one would have recognized in the stern, silent man, the light-hearted, rollicking lad of a few years before. He found his mother confined to her bed, slowly dying. Consumption, the doctor said; broken heart, said Granny. As he threw himself on his knees

by the bed and bowed his head on the feeble, toil-worn hand that held his so fondly, bitter tears of repentance blinded him and a strong purpose to atone for the past rose up in his soul. Mollie sat up for a short while that evening, and for the first time in many years real peace and happiness took up their abode in the little family. With his mother's hand in his and Granny sitting near, he told them of his life in prison, of his work there, of the kind chaplain who had interested him in study, loaned him books and helped him over the rough places. They talked hopefully of the future, planning for a time when John would have a good position, Mollie would be stronger, and all three living in a cosy little house in the suburbs.

The days lengthened into weeks and the weeks into months, and poor John's good resolutions were sorely tried. The long, careful study with the good Father at the prison, had qualified him to fill almost any clerical position; but prospective employers want references. Even if he had wished to, it would have been impossible to conceal the fact that he had been in prison, and no one would believe his assurances that

he had not committed the crime for which he had been sentenced. The prison taint was on him, and no one was willing to give him a chance.

The old companions would have welcomed him with open arms; and many a time he was tempted to give up the fight and drift back to the old roistering, care-free life. The thought of the poor little mother lying patiently on her bed of pain, and the old bent figure of Granny toiling over her wash-tub and ironing-board, drove him nearly to desperation. He would have accepted almost any work that offered, but no one wanted a "jail-bird."

Spring came, the spring of 1898, bringing with it the difficulties between the United States and Spain. One evening, earlier than usual, John returned from his fruitless search for work to find his mother sleeping and Granny busy over her accustomed toil. There was a desperate look on his face as he closed the door of his mother's room, and turned to the old lady: "It's no use, Granny, no one will give me a chance. I might just as well give up first as last."

"Give up, is it," answered Granny. "Not you,

laddie. Shure if them fine folk in the stores down town won't have ye, I know wan place ye can fill and fill handsome. Jest read that, my darlin'."

She handed him a newspaper and pointed to large headlines on the front page. It was a detailed account of some regiments of the United States troops making active preparations for their departure for Cuba. One glance at the headlines was enough to make him comprehend her meaning. He looked up at her quickly.

"Granny, dear!" he exclaimed. "'Tis plain. You want me to enlist; and they would take me, I make no doubt, and there doesn't seem to be anything else left, but how about mother? What would she say?"

"Shure, yer mother would be proud and glad to have ye a fine sojer lad, an' so she would. Some day ye'd be coming back to us a liftenant or a giniral or a giniral's body-guard, something grand and foine. 'Tis the only thing for ye, me lad."

At first Mollie did not like to send her boy away to face the dangers and temptations of a soldier's life; but Granny convinced her it was the only thing left to him. Consequently, a few weeks later when the boys

in khaki set out for camp at South Framingham, John Desmond, private, marched with them.

Granny's farewell was characteristic of the indomitable old lady. Carefully pinning a Sacred Heart badge inside the pocket of his coat, she said: "Good-bye, my lad; may the Sacred Heat bless and keep ye always. Ye've got yer chance now and make the most of it. Here's hopin' ye come back to us a captain at the laste, but if so be ye feel ye *must* get kilt, let the bullet find ye wid yer face to the inimy."

Letters came from him regularly, describing the long, tedious progress to Cuba. Then arrived the news that had made Granny so happy that morning in June. A small detachment of soldiers, out to reconnoitre, had been surrounded and nearly cut to pieces. A few had fought their way back to safety, among them John, carrying on his back the unconscious body of his lieutenant. Promotion was a matter of course, and, as Granny said, he was certainly making the most of his chance now that he had got it.

To poor, tired Mollie it seemed as if that letter was all she had waited for. She felt she could die in peace

now that she knew her boy was doing all he could to redeem his unfortunate past. A few days later, Granny watched the tired eyelids close in the last, long sleep of peace. Kneeling beside the silent figure, she whispered: "Good-by, Mollie, avourneen. 'Tis the hard time of it ye had, my poor girl, but ye're safe now wid the good Lord and His Holy Mother. Ye'll be afther seein' John, alanna, and tell him his ould mother did the best she could for the pretty wife and still prettier baby he left behind."

That same day, in far-away Cuba, a fierce battle raged on San Juan hill. When night had come and the moon shed her pitiful rays on the wounded, the dying, and the dead, among the last lay a young soldier with a smile of peace upon his upturned face, and a badge of the Sacred Heart clasped closely in his hand. In the official report of that battle, among the names of those killed appeared that of John Desmond, Corporal.

* * * * *

Granny has been for some years in a home for aged women. Her great faith and courage are still as

strong as ever, and she is quietly waiting for the call to join those she loves best on the other side of the mystic river. She speaks often of them all, and never wearies of telling how her laddie "went away for a sojer, and was kilt by them little yaller men down in Cuba." She always adds with pardonable pride: "But he died like a man, wid his face to the inimy."

THEIR VICTORY.

It was a disagreeable day in early March. A fine, mist-like rain was falling and freezing as it fell, while the fog that rolled in from the ocean shrouded the city in ghostly gloom.

The street door closed with a resounding bang and the man at the window strained his eyes to catch the last glimpse of Father John's tall figure striding down the narrow street, two little boys, one on either hand, trotting along contentedly beside him. For a few moments only could the forms of priest and children be distinguished plainly, their outlines were blurred and they became merely a dark blot moving vaguely amid surrounding mists. Finally, even that indefinite shadow disappeared, hidden from the watcher by the wall of fog that came between. Cold and heavy as was that fog bank, a far colder, far heavier cloud settled down upon the man's heart.

Dropping into a chair, he rested his elbows upon the table and, holding his throbbing head tightly between fevered palms, tried to think. How had it all happened? What was it Father John had said? Could it be possible that his children, his two beautiful boys, were gone; lost to him forever?

“You are not fit to have the care of your own children; you shall never see them again.”

Those had been the priest's last words, and their dreadful meaning suddenly sobered the man and brought him to his senses.

Never again! Never to see his children again; his bright, lovely boys that he was so proud of; that is, when he was sober enough to notice them. Yes, he knew he had been drinking pretty hard of late, and the wife too, but they had not meant to neglect the little lads. They had not meant to be unkind to them. Could they have been as bad as the priest said they were? That was the worst of the drink, it stole a man's senses away and he never knew afterwards what he might have done or said while under its influence. Last night, for instance; yesterday, the past several

days? Where had he been? What had he done? He had a hazy remembrance of some few, half rational moments, but most of the time was wrapped in utter oblivion. He must have been drinking, drinking, drinking, but where and how he knew not. The wife, too, had probably been employed in the same fashion, for she drank nearly as hard as he did. And the little lads all that time; what had become of them? Yes, Father John was right, they were *not* fit to have the care of their children.

Still, it had not always been so. He could remember, not so many years ago, either, when he and Annie were first married, what a happy little home theirs had been. He was a teamster, worked steadily, and brought his money home regularly on Saturday night. Annie was a bright, rosy-cheeked lass in those days, singing happily over her work, and always had a nice hot supper and a welcoming smile when he came home at night. To be sure, he took a glass now and then with the boys, just to be sociable, but not enough to amount to anything. Then the children came, first his sturdy, blue-eyed Tom, named for himself, and two

years later the little lad with the mother's dark eyes and curling hair. Annie's hair did curl in those days, and was soft and brown like her eyes. No one would guess it to look at her now.

Then came the strike, no work, hard times, the meetings, the speeches, the general unrest and discontent; finally, the glass too much. How well he remembered now that the first time he had come home partially under the influence of liquor. He could see again the horror and shrinking on his wife's face, the strange wonder in the eyes of the oldest boy. Alas! for him, that first glass too much was but the beginning. From then on, it was but a series of drunken bouts, followed at first by periods of repentance in which he would promise Annie never to touch a drop of liquor again. But the drinking spells became more frequent and the fits of repentance gradually ceased altogether. Their little home was abandoned when they could no longer pay the rent, and they had gradually drifted to this miserable tenement of two rooms, two dirty, squalid rooms in a dingy, narrow street.

The man raised his head from his hands and tried

to see the place as it must have looked to the priest that morning. His glance passed from one dismal object to another, noting the dirt, the squalor, the absolute neglect and wretchedness of this, his home. There, in one corner, was the bed in which his two boys had slept, and for the first time he noticed how worn and ragged was the scanty bed-covering. Dirty, too, of course. The dust and dirt of many months covered everything. It was long since he had seen broom or duster in Annie's hands; poor Annie, crouching now beside the little bed, sobbing as if her heart would break. No, he could not blame Annie, poor girl. She had tried at first to induce him to give up the drink, and had struggled bravely to keep the little home where they had been so happy, but at last, tired and discouraged, she gave up the unequal combat and had sunk to his own level.

Looking at things as he saw them now, he could not question the action of Father John, who had walked in that morning to find the father and mother not yet quite sober after one of their frequent drinking bouts, and the two little boys shivering with cold and crying with hunger. Their pale, pinched faces told plainly of

long starvation, and utter neglect was written all over them.

What was it Father John had said when he, Tom, had tried to prevent the taking away of the children? Oh, the words were bitter, bitter, and they burned into Tom's brain.

"Why should you be allowed to keep your children? What have you ever done for them? What have you done for their bodies? Left them in rags to freeze and starve alone in this wretched hole of a room while you roamed the streets in search of drink, drink and more drink. And their souls? Man! man! what have you done for their immortal souls? What kind of example have you set them? What kind of prayers have you taught them? What do you expect will become of them, soul and body, if they are left to your care? You have forfeited your right to them and now you must lose them. I shall put them in a good home where they will be properly cared for and properly instructed. You shall never see them again."

The man rose from his chair and walked unsteadily over to where his wife crouched with her head leaning

against the little bed. An unwonted mist dimmed his eyes, and something like an echo of a long-forgotten tenderness filled his heart as he laid his hand on her rough hair and said brokenly:

“Annie, girl, we’ll never see them again, never again; our little lads, our bright, pretty boys.”

His touch and his words seemed to rouse the woman to fury. She sprang to her feet, threw back the hair that had fallen over her face, and cried defiantly:

“What do I care if he’s taken them away? What do I care for anything now? There is always this to make one forget,” and going quickly to a cupboard she drew out a bottle partly filled with whiskey and raised it to her mouth.

Her husband caught her hand before she had time to take the drink. He dashed the bottle to the ground and the liquor streamed slowly across the floor. Still holding her by the arm, the man pointed to the trickling fluid and said solemnly:

“Look at that accursed stuff, Annie, look at it. ’Tis that and that alone has brought us to this pass. My girl, it’s a bad husband I’ve been to you and a bad

father to the lads, all through that wretched poison. But life isn't over yet for you and me, Annie, and why shouldn't we do better in the time to come than we have done in the past? Why shouldn't we again be as happy as we were long ago when we were first married? I promise you now that not another drop of drink shall ever pass my lips. Do you make the same promise, girl, and we'll begin all over again. Maybe—some day—we can have the children back, for we cannot live without them; oh! we cannot live without them,” and the man threw himself on his knees beside the children's bed, his form shaken with grief.

For a moment, his wife stood looking at the broken bottle at her feet, then at the empty bed and the man beside it. Gradually the reckless defiance faded and her face wore the look of one who longed to hope but dared not.

“Happy as we used to be,” she murmured slowly. “O Tom, do you think we ever could? I'll try, Tom—honest, I'll try, if—if you think—he'll let us have the children back again.”

Christmas eve, nearly four years later. In the cozy

kitchen of their tidy little flat sat a man and woman, she busily engaged putting another patch on her husband's well-worn working coat, he smoking his pipe and making a pretense of reading the evening paper. It was only a pretense, however, for from behind the shelter of the newspaper he was furtively watching his wife as she sat and sewed. More than one silent tear had fallen unheeded upon the garment she was mending, and the man knew full well that her heart echoed the pain and longing that filled his own. Presently, with a glance at her husband, apparently deeply absorbed in his reading, she laid her sewing down and stole quietly from the room. The paper dropped unnoticed to the floor and the man leaned his head upon his hand and fell to thinking. Poor Annie, he knew where she had gone and why. His mind followed her to that little room next their own which they had prepared with such loving care for the two boys, who seemed as far away from them as ever. Would they never come back? Would he never see them again, the children for whose sake he and Annie had worked so hard and fought such a desperate fight? Terrible

had been their struggle trying to keep that promise they had made the day the boys were taken away from them. Terrible, indeed, but with God's help they had conquered and the promise had been kept.

Tom's mind went back over the days that had come and gone since the morning he had watched the figures of Father John and the children disappear into the fog. He thought again of the bitter, bitter time that had followed for him and for Annie; of their unsuccessful efforts to obtain steady work, of the discouragement and black despair of those days, and worst of all and hardest to fight had been the fierce, almost uncontrollable longing for the drink. Many and many a time he and Annie had looked at each other, and he knew the same thought was in both their minds. What was the use of trying; what was the use of fighting any longer? They might just as well give up first as last.

One day he had said to her: "What's the good of trying any more? We'll never do it, never. It's the hard world this is, hard and cruel to the likes of us. They say, 'give a dog a bad name and hang him.' Well, that ain't a patch on what happens to the man

who gives himself a bad name. No one will trust him, no one will give him half a chance, no one will believe that he really wants to do better. When a man falls, there's many a hand ready and willing to push him even lower still, but never a one is reached out to help him up again. We might just as well give up trying, for we'll never succeed."

Then his eyes had fallen on the little bed in the corner, the little empty bed, tumbled and tossed as the boys had left it. Once more he and Annie had looked at each other, and once more they had taken up the struggle and fought on with renewed energy.

On one occasion she had suggested that he go to Father John and ask him to help them.

Tom's answer had been:

"No, Annie, I'll not go to him yet awhile. I know he'd help us along, I know he'd help me to get a steady job, but I'll not go to him till I can ask him to give me back my children. When I can show him that we are fit to take care of them, when I have steady work and a nice, tidy little home to bring them back to, then I will go to Father John, but not till then."

And at last, after a long and weary struggle, the day *had* come when the little home was ready and Tom could go to Father John.

He thought now of that day and of the good Father's amazement when Tom told him who he was. That amazement was not to be wondered at, for no one would recognize in the man of to-day, with his straight figure, bright, clear eyes and open, manly countenance, the slouching drunkard of a few years before. Tom thought of that day, of the Father's words of praise and encouragement, of his promise to move heaven and earth if need be to get the children back. Tom thought, too, of the long period of waiting since that day. It was a much harder task to get the children than even Father John had thought, for they had been adopted by a wealthy Catholic family that had since moved away, no one knew where. It required some time to find them, and when found, the adopted parents refused positively to give up the little boys, to whom they had become devotedly attached. All efforts on Father John's part proved of no avail, and finally he was obliged to take the matter into court.

A long legal battle followed, and now, on Christmas eve, poor Tom sat in his lonely kitchen while the mother knelt, weeping and praying, by the little empty bed in the room they had made ready for their children. How much longer, thought Tom, how much longer would they have to wait?

Hearing his wife returning, he hastily picked up the neglected newspaper and was reading diligently when she entered the room and resumed her sewing. It was on this little scene of domestic comfort and tranquillity that Father John looked a few moments later when he softly opened the door and stood on the threshold. How different, he thought, was this home from the one he had entered nearly four years before. To be sure, everything was of the simplest and plainest, but scrupulously neat and clean. What a difference, too, in that father and mother; who could believe they were the same people!

'A hearty "Merry Christmas to you both," was the first intimation Tom and his wife had of the presence of Father John, and they sprang quickly to their feet to welcome the visitor. Tom never could remember

just what happened after that. He had a sort of hazy recollection of Father John saying something, of a startled cry from Annie, and of the next moment seeing, framed in the doorway, the half-frightened, half-eager faces of his boys. The strong man staggered and clung to the table with trembling hands, but the mother was on her knees, her arms around her little ones, laughing and crying over them by turns.

Father John will never forget the look of rapture on Tom's face as he gazed on his children, tears of joy streaming down his cheeks. The good Father's own eyes were moist as he closed the door softly behind him, leaving the reunited family to themselves and their happiness.

That that happiness is destined to be of long duration grows more apparent day by day. At least, so thinks Father John as he watches Sunday after Sunday to see the proud father bringing his boys to the Sunday-school Mass. At first, he sometimes wondered if the children ever thought longingly of the wealthy home they had just left, if they ever contrasted that home with their present humble surroundings, and if

they felt any discontent or dissatisfaction with the change.

With that thought in his mind, Father John asked the eldest boy one day where he would rather be, in the beautiful house in which he lived when he was away in the country, or at home here with papa? Without a moment's hesitation, and looking proudly up at the tall man whose hand clasped his so fondly, the child replied emphatically :

“ At home here with my papa.”

“ God bless you, little man ; God bless you all,” said Father John ; and certainly, God *has* blessed them.

MY FRIEND, THE RAG-PICKER.

SHE was a quaint little creature, my friend the rag-picker, with her sharp, bright eyes and nimble tongue. "Old Nance," they called her in the alley where she lived, and many a poor soul in that dismal place had good reason to love and bless the name. Her small tenement room was a haven of refuge for many an unfortunate. Poor she was in the goods of this world, as poor as were her neighbors, but rich in possessing an inexhaustible fund of kindness and sympathy which she lavished on all who needed it. Then, too, she was such a cheerful little old woman with a happy way of seeing some light in even the deepest darkness. It must be a black cloud indeed for which Nancy could find no silver lining. I asked her once how it was she was always so happy and never seemed to worry about anything. Her answer set me thinking.

"Well, child, for three score years the Lord has taken pretty good care of old Nancy, an' I think I can trust Him to take care of me for the rest of the

journey. What's the use of worryin' about to-morrow? We can only live one day at a time, so just take to-day an' do the best you can with it an' leave to-morrow to the Lord. Many a night I've gone to bed hungry when there wouldn't be a crust in the house, but I've thanked God for the bed to sleep in, and in the mornin' somethin' would surely turn up. There'd be work to do an' a few cents to earn, or somethin' would happen. Just hold hard, my dear, trust the Lord an' He ain't goin' to forget you."

Many an afternoon when Nancy's work was slack (her occupation was picking over and sorting rags in a junk shop), I have sought her little room to be entertained by her amusing chatter. Sometimes, a neighbor or two would drop in; sometimes, a whole troop of children, for she had a special fancy for little ones, and they in turn simply worshipped her.

One especially stormy day we were sitting in our accustomed places before the stove, I, as a guest, occupying the only chair the apartment owned; Nancy perched on an overturned soap box, a donation from a nearby grocery. For the first time since I had known

her, she had been silent for five consecutive minutes. I watched the old, bent figure as she leaned over and held her hands to the heat. Twisted, toil-worn hands they were, and they trembled as she held them before her. Outside, the storm raged wildly, the snow beating against the window and rattling the panes; inside, we two sat, Nancy watching the fire and I watching her.

Presently, she looked up with a start, exclaiming:

“Bless me, child, I clean forgot you were there! It’s the storm that did it. When the wind howls an’ shrieks an’ beats up against the house like that as if it wanted to tear the roof off an’ was mad because it couldn’t, it always sets me thinkin’ of my boy, Danny. It was in just such a storm as this that he come home to me, come home to die. Did you ever hear tell of my Danny? No? Well, the fine, likely lad he was an’ a good boy, too, till he took to the drink. That led him into bad company, and first thing I knew he was off an’ away an’ I never set eyes on him for nigh ten years. It was the black, bitter time for me, those ten years, an’ it’s little sleep I got at night for wonderin’

where he was an' what he was doin'. Still, I followed him with my prayers an' I trusted the Lord to bring him back to me. An' sure he did come back that stormy night six years ago. Just such a night as this it was. I remember what a time I had comin' home from the shop, fightin' against the storm every step of the way. I remember, too, as I passed the bar-room on the corner (you know the place) I looked in through the window at all that crowd of men lined up to the bar. It was Saturday night an' the place was jammed. Poor fellows, I suppose it's hard for them to keep away from it. When things look black an' all the world seems goin' against 'em, it's so easy to turn to the stuff that'll make 'em forget their troubles for a time. You see, they never think of the poor women folk an' the little children that are goin' to suffer for it.

"Well, as I passed the saloon that night, the door opened an' a man come tumblin' out into the street. Drunk as he could be, he was, an' he just fell down the steps an' lay there all in a heap in the snow. Two men come out after him to pick him up an' help him off home. By the light from the window, I see his face

an' 'twas the face of a man I knew well, one of the neighbors just up the alley. I knew for a fact that his children were starvin' an' his poor wife tryin' to earn a few cents doin' a day's washin', an' her with a baby not a week old yet. Yes indeed, 'twas I that knew it, for wasn't I there in her little kitchen the day before when some folk from the church come down with baskets of coal an' provisions? I suppose you won't believe it but the poor children were that hungry they just grabbed the raw potatoes from one of the baskets an' ate 'em up skin an' all. An' the father couldn't feed his starvin' family because all his money went for whiskey. They can't find a penny to buy bread for the little ones but they can always get a dime for a drink.

“ Well, the sight of him set me thinkin' of my own poor boy, an' when I got home, somehow I couldn't get him out of my head. The storm was beatin' fierce against the window just as it's doin' now, an' wonderin' if my lad was out in it, I was beggin' God to keep a watch over him wherever he might be.

“ Then, all of a sudden, the door opened an' in he walked. I knew it was the lad the minute I set eyes on

him, but I guess none but his mother would have known him, so terribly changed he was. I knew, too, why God had sent him home to me, for death was in his face even then. I guess he knew it himself though he had little to say in those first days after comin' home.

"Well, winter wore away an' the warm weather was comin' an' I began to worry about him. He was failin' fast but never a thought would he give to seein' a priest an' makin' his confession.

"One evenin' I was sittin' right here, with him lyin' in the bed there as weak as a baby, an' I just made up my mind to have it out with him. We talked an' we talked, me pleadin' with him all the time; but no, he wouldn't listen to sendin' for a priest. At last he says to me:

" 'Mother,' says he, ' 'taint no use talkin' to me of confession. I'm too black a sheep to be washed white now. Why, mother,' says he, 'there isn't a sin you could name that I've not committed.'

" 'Oh! yes there is, lad,' says I. 'You never committed suicide.'

“ ‘ No,’ says he, ‘ but I tried to three times.’

“ Well, that in a way staggered me for a moment an’ I couldn’t think of a word to say. Then he says kind of fierce-like an’ usin’ words I couldn’t repeat :

“ ‘ An’ you can just bet that if I don’t get rid of this pain pretty soon, I’ll try my hand at suicide again an’ I’ll take care not to fail this time.’

“ ‘ Well, lad,’ says I. ‘ When was the last time you tried it an’ failed?’ ”

“ ‘ Back there in the winter,’ says he. ‘ Just before I come home.’

“ ‘ Too bad!’ I says, shakin’ my head. ‘ Too bad you didn’t succeed that time, if you’re bent on suicidin’.’

“ ‘ Why?’ says he, lookin’ real surprised.

“ ‘ Well,’ says I, quite calm-like. ‘ Hell’s a pretty hot place, they say, an’ the thought of facin’ it mightn’t seem so bad in the cold winter as it would now comin’ on hot summer weather. That is, if one was really bent on goin’ there. ‘ Still,’ says I, ‘ I dunno but what Hell’s a pretty fearsome place to think of goin’ to at any season of the year. It’s a great pity, so it is, that

people insist on goin' there when the good God is tryin' so hard to keep them out of it. He must want us to go to Heaven pretty bad when He'd send His Own Son down into the world as a little Baby to grow up an' suffer an' die for us as He did. Just think, lad, of all He suffered; the agony in the garden, the blows an' stripes an' cruel scourgin', His Precious Blood pourin' down like water. Then, the long, wicked thorns they druv into His head, an' His sufferin' for three long hours on the Cross. An' all that, lad, to keep us from goin' to Hell and make us able to save our souls an' be with Him in Heaven. Then what do these same people do that He died for? They just turn around an' say to Him: "I don't care if You did suffer all that for me. I'm goin' to Hell anyway even if You have tried to save me."

" 'Danny, boy,' I says. 'Do you suppose it was for nothin' that you failed, those three times you tried to kill yourself? It was the good Lord, Danny, Who wouldn't let you, for He wanted to give you one more chance to save your soul.

" 'Look, Dan,' I says to him, pointin' to a little pic-

ture I'd always kept hangin' on the wall. 'Do you remember that picture, lad, the picture of the Good Shepherd? Well, it's the Good Shepherd Who's had you in His keepin' all this time an' has followed after you an' brought you back to me. I've prayed to Him for you day an' night, Danny, an' sure He's brought you home at last. Do you mind the day you first asked me about that picture? A wee chap you were then, the top of your curly little head no higher than that table there. It seems but yesterday, lad, that you stood an' looked at that picture an' asked me what it meant. Nothin' would do you but for me to tell you the whole story. So I sat just here, you on my lap with your big eyes fixed on the picture an' I told you the story of the poor, foolish little lamb who strayed away from the fold one day an' wandered off to have a good time in the world outside. At first everythin' seemed lovely an' he skipped over the hills an' the valleys an' played with the flowers an' listened to the birds singin'. He thought how beautiful the world was and how foolish were those good sheep to stay cooped up in the fold. The sun shone bright an' it was all just grand, an'

when he saw the Shepherd following after to take him home, he kicked up his little heels an' galloped off farther an' farther. Then the dark night came and the poor little lamb began to shiver with cold an' fear. By this time he was ever so far from home, wanderin' in a great forest where the branches of the trees caught an' held him an' big thorns scratched an' cut him an' at last the poor lamb fell down amid the brambles and briars an' hid his little head an' cried. He could hear the howlin' of the wolves as they come nearer an' nearer an' oh! how he wished he had stayed safe at home.

“ ‘ Then, when the wolves were almost on him, he heard the Shepherd callin' to him an' he wanted to jump up an' run to him, but the thorns on the bush held him down an' he couldn't get away from them. Then the Shepherd come who had heard the bleating of His little lamb and had seen his blood on the leaves, an' He pulled away all the thorns an' took the poor tired little thing into His arms an' started home with him. At first, the lamb was afraid to look up for he was sure the Shepherd would be very angry, but soon

he heard the kindest, sweetest voice sayin' to him: "Why are you frightened, my poor little lamb? Didn't I know you by the pitiful sound of your voice, and didn't I call you by your own name? Do you not know that I am the Good Shepherd and would lay down My life for My sheep?"

"Then the lamb caught sight of the Shepherd's hands and saw they were wet with blood and he looked up into the Shepherd's face an' beheld there nothin' but a wonderful love an' pity an' he knew he was forgiven.

"Do you mind that story, Danny,' says I, 'do you mind it now; 'an' do you mind how often you made me tell it to you in the days so long ago?'

"Well, Dan, that's you all over. You're just like that foolish lamb, but the Good Shepherd has found you an' is bringin' you home. Look up into His face, lad, and see the blood on His hands and on the garment near His Heart an' be forgiven. Don't fight against His goodness any longer.'"

"Well," continued the old woman; "we never said another word that night an' for several days confes-

sion wasn't mentioned between us. Still, I noticed that when he thought I wasn't lookin', he'd keep his eyes on that little picture, an' once I saw his lips movin' as if he was prayin'. It was early in June that his sufferin' was ended an' the good Lord took him home. Confession? Of course, he went to confession. Received all the Last Sacraments an' the priest standin' over him when he breathed his last in the Arms of the Good Shepherd.

"Well, when they laid him away beside his father an' the two little girls that left me to go to God when they were babies, I said a great prayer of thanksgivin' by the grave. I could lay my old head on the pillow at night now an' sleep in peace for I'd know where my boy was. The Good Shepherd had heard my prayer and brought him home safe. That's why I say to you an' to everyone:

" 'Hold hard, trust the Lord, an' He ain't goin' to forget you.' "

FAITHFUL ALAN.

“ WOULD you desert the gate? ”

A mere child asked the question with an earnestness surprising in one so young.

It was the recreation hour at St. Ann's Hermitage, and the boys were scattered about the playground; some clustered in groups discussing the fine points of yesterday's game; others busily chasing “ flies ” that an obliging prefect was knocking out to them.

On the outskirts of the field, several figures stood apart engaged in animated conversation. One, a typical American boy of fourteen, brimfull of life and mischief, was leaning against a tree, his hands thrust deep into his pockets and a quizzical smile playing upon his countenance. He had just made some proposal to his companions who agreed to the suggestion with acclamations of delight. A sturdy youngster, perhaps more thoughtful than the older boy, with fun and character blended in every line of the deter-

mined little face, received the proposition with a shout. Throwing his cap high into the air, he executed a hand spring in the most approved style, then recovered his balance and paused for a moment. The look of mischievous fun vanished and he glanced with anxious inquiry from one to another of his companions. It was only a boyish prank that had been suggested, a bit of idle mischief, but still it was a distinct infringement of the rule. The young face grew very serious and then burst forth the question, "Would you desert the gate? And after our promise to the Father!"

Magic words those; "our promise to the Father." The would-be mischief makers looked at one another, the shouting ceased and laughing faces instantly became sobered. They had forgotten their promise to the Father.

The boys never spoke of their chaplain as anything but "the Father." It was, "the Father wants to see you;" or, "the Father said so and so," and this last statement was almost as sacred to them as a definition of the Church.

The Father had a strange mastery over these boys

of his. He had gained it partly by peering down through the eyes into the very soul and by shrewd conjecture, disclosing many little secrets thought to be known to God alone. Partly, too, by his custom of making the sign of the cross upon the forehead only to give the cheek a playful little cuff to accompany his: "God bless you, my boy."

Confirming them, the boys called it. How the new boys were warned to beware of it! How each mirthful youngster pretended to fear that confirmation! The eyes would blink, the face would take on a tense expression as if some dread ordeal were to be undergone. Then, a dodge or two with a final "ouch!" as the confirmation took effect. It is said that when the Bishop came to administer the sacrament that was to convert these little harum-scarums into soldiers of Christ, he was not a little astonished to see one small head shrink back from the pastoral touch. "Force of habit," explained the knight-errant with a grin when later taken to task by the Father for his temerity.

This ceremony of confirmation was generally reserved for the close of private interviews with the

Father, to encourage its recipient to fresh conquests or to soothe the troubled spirits when the Father had been finding fault. For he could reprimand at times and when he did correct his boys it was with a kindness and firmness that brought the little culprit to his knees at once. But oh! that little tap at the end made amends for all. And if the Father, preoccupied of mind, at times forgot his bounden duty, the slighted victim in knickerbockers would hang around for a minute or so, place himself in the way of the confirmation and looking up mischievously, remark:

“Ain’t you forgetting something, Father?”

Then the Father would remember and the twinkle in his eye might lead one to suspect that the lapse of memory was not wholly accidental. But a little heart was glad again and willing feet hastened off to the next duty, incidentally registering a dent in the threshold as they passed.

Still, it was not this alone that had enslaved the boys’ affection. It had helped, of course, but there was a higher, more spiritual bond of union between the Father and his boys. It had come about in this way.

In his first chat with them, he had told them a story. It was no story made to order; no fanciful tale of days of old, of valiant knights and deeds of chivalry; no exaggerated accounts of the doings of famous generals or statesmen. No, it was a real story of a real boy like themselves, a simple uneducated little colored boy of our own day, one of his boys who had died a martyr. As an eye-witness of the awful havoc wrought by the Jamaican earthquake, the Father had told the story of Faithful Alan, a story of boyish heroism that brightened the gloom of those days of riot and disorder which followed on the great catastrophe.

In the city of Kingston alone, within the space of half a minute, two thousand souls had been hurled into eternity without a chance to make their peace with God. Scarcely a building was left standing in the desolated city and the residence of the missionaries had shared the fate of all the others.

A puny, colored lad of fourteen had been engaged as porter by the Fathers, but when the awful tremors had laid all waste, a child of such an age could be of little service to them. Fearing also for his safety if he re-

mained in the city, they sent him to his home. However, when the noble little fellow had assured himself that his parents were safe in their country home and there was nothing he could do for them, he refused to remain with them. The Fathers had been kind to him when he was in want, now they were themselves in need. He would go back to help them. And back he went, back to the heart of the city's desolation, back to exposure and even hunger perhaps.

The Fathers were making their headquarters in an open yard in the midst of the ruins. Alan pleaded that he be allowed to give what help he could and there was no resisting his plea. A single gateway gave admission to the yard and he was commissioned to take his post there and fill once more the rôle of porter. Poor little fellow! He had always been a sickly child, consumed by the burning Jamaican fever; yet he took his place cheerfully and remained there unprotected from the insidious rays of the tropical sun until his blood seemed to boil within his veins.

All through the tense excitement of those days, when every few hours the earth rocked and swayed

and drove fresh crowds to the gate clamoring for priests to cleanse the overburdened souls, the child stood there stolid and silent or dragged his weary, aching feet in quest of a missionary to shrive a trembling penitent crouching by the gate in abject terror. Then as the evening shadows told that another day of sorrow was at an end, the trusty little warden would cast himself upon the ground and, curled up like a dog beneath the wreck of a carriage standing near, would keep faithful watch and ward through the long hours of the night.

'As the days slipped past, the earthquakes lost their terror for the blacks. Men no longer sought the priestly absolution, but instead, the constant cry was heard for food. The cares for the soul had given place to bodily want; the penitent had become the beggar at the gate. The recipient of charity is often hard to please and as the faithful little Alan doled out whatever aid the Fathers were able to give, he frequently had to bear, not harsh words alone, but cruel blows and even brutal kicks. Still, the boy had been told to keep the gate and keep it he did even at the cost of his life.

One day, a mob of vagrant beggars gathered at the gate of set purpose to force an entrance while the missionaries were engaged in their errands of mercy through the city. The child was alone. There was no time to summon help. The gate must be guarded and by himself alone. Quickly the little brain acted in the crucial moment. Courageously he went forth, closed the gate behind him and then stood there, his frail body a living barrier to the fury of the mob.

They ordered him to stand aside; he did not flinch. They threatened, but his shrill voice rose above their clamor and while the little hands gesticulated wildly, and the deep-set eyes sparkled with all the intensity and excitement of his race, he bravely ordered them back and stood there firmly at his post.

Not to be frustrated by a sickly child, the mob endeavored to rush the gate and crushed and trod upon the faithful hero. As the little fellow sank beneath their blows, the cowards, appalled at their own work, slunk away. The gate was still safe in the possession of the dying Alan.

Tender hands bore the child within. It was too

late; the mob had done its work. For two days the brave boy struggled on, suffering an agony of pain. Conscious to the last, the little martyr of obedience passed to his reward, happy to die in serving the Fathers who had been kind to him.

Such had been the story the Father had told his boys. His eyes were dim and there was a tremor in his voice as he went on to say that when the cares of life bore heavily upon him, when the body was weary and the soul, too, craved for rest, he drew new strength from the memory of his little Alan. Brave, faithful Alan, his poor, fragile body was now the food for worms but his pure soul, thrice happy in Heaven with the band of martyrs singing the praises of their Queen, awaited the glad day when it might hasten back to earth to gather up the handful of dust that had once constituted its body and bear it away to a blessed immortality.

The Father paused for an instant. Something like a sigh escaped his lips and his hand furtively brushed away a tear. Then turning to the boys before him,

with all earnestness of soul, his voice quivering with suppressed emotion, he cried out :

“ Oh ! my boys, not I but God Himself has set each one of you to guard a gate, the gateway of your immortal souls. Not I, but God has committed the trust to you. Prove yourselves worthy of this confidence. Guard well the gate and though sin and the demons rage as an angry mob without, let the memory of my Alan nerve you to resistance. Guard the gate even at the cost of life itself. Then when the day of final triumph comes and the faithful wardens reap their due reward, as my Alan comes running towards me with the glad cry upon his lips :

“ Father, I kept the gate ” ; may you, my other Alans, each take up the little fellow’s words and cry :
“ Yes, and we have kept our gates. Our gates are safe.”

The story had been told many months ago but love and devotion to little Alan had grown apace among the boys until he had become the model of the school. Many a prayer found its way heavenward addressed

to this unknown child, simple, earnest, boyish prayers for strength and courage to keep the gate.

At first the boys had regarded their new chaplain with reverential awe; one of his boys had been a martyr and this seemed to place him far above their earthly sphere. But when they stood, each in turn, hands resting in his firm grasp, and heard him asking them to take his Alan's place, how their hearts leaped for joy! How readily they had promised to guard their gates! Their reverence had turned to filial love. Henceforth, the Father held their young hearts in mastery.

"Would you desert the gate?" It was a mere boyish prank that had been suggested but the delicate conscience of the child found sin in every infraction of the rule.

They had all promised the Father to be his little 'Alans guarding their souls from even the smallest blemish.

The gate was not deserted and the fearless child had shown himself worthy of being called another faithful Alan.

“WHAT DOTH IT PROFIT?”

THE great financier sat at his desk in his private office and watched with impatient disgust the figure standing on the mat by the door. It was a gaunt, disheveled figure that stood there, with hollow cheeks and bent shoulders, while trembling fingers nervously picked at the ragged cap they held. The mass of nondescript rags which formed his clothing, the worn and battered shoes, in fact, the entire appearance of the figure by the door proclaimed him what he was; the wreck of what might once have been a man.

And indeed, that was the only name by which he had been known for many a day; it was the only name by which he cared to be known, “The Wreck.”

The great man’s face spoke unutterable disgust and his voice cut like cold steel as he spoke to the figure by the door:

“Well, what brings you here to-day? Did I not

tell you the last time you honored me with a call that I hoped never to see your face again?"

"Yes, Dick, I know, I know," replied a shaking voice from the doorway. "I know I ain't nothin' ter be proud of, I know I've been a disgrace to ye all my life an' ye ain't got no call ter be glad ter see me. I know I'm nothin' but a wreck what has just been driftin', driftin', always driftin' from bad to worse, but I'm yer brother still, Dick, an' she was yer sister, an' it's a message from her that brings me here to-day."

"Oh! yes, I know what ye mean by that look on yer face. Ye think I lied ter ye that last time I came here (nearly a year ago, now, warn't it?) when I told ye she was dyin', just dyin' from cold an' hunger an' neglect, an' I begged ye to do somethin' to try and save her. Ye thought then I was lyin' ter ye an' ye told me so and ye turned me out without listenin' to what I came to say. Remember that day, Dick? You may have forgotten it but I never will. There ye was, settin' just where y'are now, with yer fancy cigar between yer lips, yer rugs all over the floor, them pictures on the walls, the room so warm an' cozy an'

everything money could buy all around ye. Then, there was she, yer own sister, dyin' in a miserable little attic, so cold, so hungry, an' ye told me I was lyin' ter ye an' wouldn't do a thing ter help her.

"No, Dick, ye needn't start ter interrupt me an' ye needn't ring that bell ter have me put out. Ye did that once before but I've a message ter give ye now an' I mean ter give it before I leave. When I've said my say, I'll go an' ye'll never see my face again, but ye've got ter listen ter me this time for it's a message from the dead I'm bringin' ye. Yes, from the dead, Dick, for she died that night after I was here before."

The figure by the door had, almost unconsciously, straightened itself, and something like the spark of a lost manhood glistened in his eye as he came a few steps nearer to the man at the desk. A strangely tender note crept into his voice as he went on reminiscently: "Ye remember that day, Dick, when I'd come ter ye for help for her an' ye had me turned out into the street and threatened ter have me arrested as a drunken loafer. I had been drinkin' that day but I wasn't drunk, an' what I went through after I got

back to the leaky little attic we called home, would have sobered a man much worse than me. 'An', Dick, I've never touched a drop from that day to this.

"Well, when I got home an' see her lyin' there on the bed, her poor thin face an' hands all blue with the cold an' she dyin' for want of food an' medicine, my heart just raged within me and I would have cursed ye with all the black curses I could think of, but she wouldn't have it so. She made me sit beside her an' she took my hands in both of hers an' talked ter me so kind an' gentle. Ye know how she used ter talk to us, Dick, when we was little lads back there on the farm an' she the only father an' mother that we had. Well, it was just like that until she made me feel I was a little child again. I saw that she felt so too, and seemed ter think we was all young again an' back in the old home.

"By an' by, I knew her mind was wanderin' for she was livin' the past all over again. She spoke of things I'd long forgotten an' she spoke of things I never knew, an' it broke my heart to listen to her. She was a girl again an' we was two little scraps of boys an'

she was bringin' us home from father's funeral. She had always been the only mother we ever knew an' now she would have ter take father's place as well. We was too little to understand it all but the sight of the coffin, or the black clothes, or something, must have frightened us for we had cried ourselves to sleep. She carried us up, one at a time, an' put us in our little bed an' was kneelin' down beside us an' prayin'. I wish ye could have heard her, Dick: even your heart would have broken. She was prayin' God to help her be mother an' father ter the two of us; prayin' Him ter keep us always as good an' innocent as we was then an' make us grow up into good, brave men. Oh! Dick, as I sat an' listened to her an' thought of her prayin' over us as we lay asleep in our little bed an' then thought of all I'd been since an' the kind of a man I'd grown into, I could have crawled in the dust like the worm that I was.

"Then she went on talkin' about the days when we was a little older an' the hard times came, an' she had ter sell the farm an' move down into rooms in the village. She took in sewin' to support us an' sent us two

lads to school. Remember them days, Dick? I do. I never thought about it then but I can see now just how it was with her in them days. Long after we two was sleepin' sound, she'd sit an' stitch, stitch, stitch, to keep us in food an' clothes so we could go tēr school an' get some learnin'. I warn't never much at the books, Dick, an' was a wild scamp even then an' always gettin' into trouble; but you was straight an' steady, peggin' away an' bringin' home all the prizes.

“She went through it all that night, Dick, all our school days, all the days that followed when you had gone down into the city to make yer fortune an' I was the black sheep an' terror of the village. She went through it all over again, her days spent in constant drudgery, her nights spent in prayin' for her two boys; the one down in the great city makin' his way in the world, mountin' step by step up the ladder of fame an' fortune, but slowly, slowly forgettin' the folks left behind in the country town; the other a good-for-nothin' scamp, the village scandal, who was wastin' his youth an' manhood in drink an' gamblin'.

“Then she went on talkin' about that time when her

eyes began ter fail an' she had ter give up the sewin' and was gettin' poorer an' poorer every day. Her blindness sorter sobered me for awhile an' we came down to the city, she an' me, hopin' that I could find somethin' ter do an' begin all over again; hopin' too, ter find you an' have her eyes attended by some good doctor who might cure her perhaps.

" You had long ago stopped writin' to us but ye was pretty famous by that time an' it warn't hard ter find ye. She had me write ter ye, an' Dick, I never knew until that night she was dyin' what was in the letter ye sent her in answer. Her eyes were pretty bad, but she made out ter read yer letter an' only told me that ye wouldn't have nothin' ter do with us. I never knew until the night she was dyin' that ye offered ter take her into your home an' provide for her if she'd leave me an' promise never ter see me again. Ye never liked me, Dick, even when we was little chaps, perhaps because she seemed ter like me best. But, Dick, she only did that because I was the wild one an' I guess she thought I needed her most. That's always the way with women like her. It ain't the strong one that's on

the top, the one that'll take care of 'em and do for 'em, that they'll stick to; it's the weak one, the one that's underneath, the one they think needs 'em most. She knew I wanted ter do better an' she wouldn't leave me not for anythin' ye would offer her.

"I don't blame ye for what ye done, Dick. Ye knew what I was an' ye didn't want me disgracin' ye in yer grand home with all yer fine friends an' the great lady who was yer wife. No, Dick, I don't blame ye for not wantin' me, but I wish I'd known what was in yer letter. Things would have been very different for her, poor girl.

"Well, I didn't know an' she stuck ter me an' we tried ter scrap along somehow. 'Twas hard work, mighty hard, for her eyes grew worse an' worse an' then she took sick an' was failin' day by day. I done what I could for her an' I tried ter let the drink alone, but sometimes it would get the better of me. I tell ye, Dick, them were the black days for both of us.

"At last, in despair, I came ter you that day an' then went home an' sat an' watched her dyin'. All night long she talked on an' on, all about the past an'

about you an' me. Then towards mornin' she fell into a kind of doze an' when she woke her mind was all clear again, but she was so weak she could hardly speak ter me. I saw there was somethin' she wanted ter say so I leaned over close to her an' she gave me the message I've come ter bring ye to-day. Her voice was only a whisper and her hard breathin' an' the wicked cough kept stoppin' her, but she couldn't rest till she'd sent her message ter you. These was her very words, Dick, just as she spoke 'em.

“ ‘Tell him,’ she says: ‘tell him I’ve watched him an’ followed him along every step of the way. I watched him when he first came down to this great cruel city; I watched an’ prayed for him in them days of struggle an’ homesickness when he was fightin’ so hard ter make his way in the world. I watched him when he first began to climb up step by step an’ I was proud of him an’ glad of his success. But oh! the little worm of bitterness that began to creep in when I saw him, slowly but surely, forgettin’ not only me an’ the old home but everything he had once held dear. Oh! the pain in my heart as I watched the cares of the

world, the strivin' after fame an' fortune, the thirst for money an' power, gradually drivin' out of his life all thought of his God an' his religion. Still, I kept watchin' him an' prayin' for him even when his letters stopped comin' an' I knew we was all put outside his life forever more.

“ ‘ Tell him I’ve never quit lovin’ him, I’ve never quit prayin’ for him, an’ now when I know I’m dyin’ my last thoughts are of him.

“ ‘ He has won a high place in the world, he has money, friends, a grand home, everything the world can give, but what will all these do for him when he comes to lie as I’m lyin’ now? Can he take his house an’ gold an’ silver with him? Can any of his fine friends go with him into that awful world beyond? Will all his money buy him a place in Heaven? Tell him to look back on the first pages of the little catechism I taught him so many years ago and read just one sentence there. “ What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? ”

“ ‘ That’s my dying message to him, that’s all I

have to leave him, my love, my blessing an' them words:

“What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?”

“She was quiet then for a little while, so quiet I thought she was gone, but soon she roused herself an' began ter speak again.

“‘Tell him, too,’ she says; ‘tell him I’m leavin’ this world with all its cares an’ worries, but I’m goin’ to a better an’ a brighter one an’ I’ll still keep watchin’ him an’ prayin’ for him there. Tell him when the day comes to him as come it must, when he sees all his money, all his friends, everything, slipping away from him an’ he stands all alone facin’ the end, he will still have a soul to save. Tell him to remember that. He may gain the whole world but the day will come when he must lose it all. Bid him remember on that day that he still has a soul to save.’

“She never spoke no more but fell into a stupor like an’ just as the day came peepin’ in through the cracked window panes, her poor tired heart stopped beatin’, that kind, lovin’ heart that I had helped ter break.

“I tell ye what, Dick, when the day o’ reckonin’ comes you an’ me will have a pretty big pile ter answer for an’ her death there in that cold freezin’ attic, her death brought on by want an’ fret an’ worry, won’t be the least among our sins. I realized that as I knelt beside her that winter mornin’ an’ I promised her solemn that I’d never touch the drink again an’ I’d try ter live as she would want me to. I’ve kept that promise, Dick, though it’s been pretty hard. I tried ter get work ter do, but there’s no one ’ll trust the likes o’ me. A little snow shovelin’, a little wood choppin’, the Lord alone knows how I’ve picked up a few cents here an’ a few cents there. I’ve begged my bread from door to door an’ I’ve slept on a bench out in the public parks when I hadn’t a penny ter pay for a night’s lodgin’.

“I tried ter see you, Dick, tried again an’ again, for I wanted ter bring ye her message. They’d keep tellin’ me ye was away an’ I couldn’t see ye; they thought I was a tramp just come beggin’ I suppose.

“Lately, I’ve come ter realize that I’m goin’ the same way she did. The doctors at the dispensary told

me so an' I guess ye need only look at me ter know they spoke the truth. They've found a place for me ter go to, a home for just such wrecks as I be, where I can wait for the end in peace. I'm goin' there to-day, Dick, but I made up my mind ter see you before I went an' give ye her message. Last night as I lay out under the stars (an' it's pretty cold these autumn nights, out there under the stars) I got ter thinkin' of her and of how I'd see her soon again. I couldn't face her if I hadn't brought her message, so there it is, Dick, there it is.

“ ‘What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?’ ”

The man at the desk was sitting now with his head bowed upon his hand, his face concealed from view. “The Wreck” had drawn gradually nearer and was standing close beside him. Stretching forth his hand he continued:

“Dick, old man, we've never been very good friends, you an' me, but I'm goin' on a long journey, a journey there'll be no comin' back from. Death is beckonin' ter me, lad, an' I'll be answerin' the call pretty soon

now. This is the last time I'll see ye in this world an', after all, we're brothers, Dick. Won't you—shake hands—before I go?"

Slowly, the man at the desk raised his head; slowly he turned and looked his brother in the face. Then, without a word, he rose to his feet and grasped the outstretched hand of the Wreck. For a moment they stood so, hand clasping hand, eye speaking to eye, but tongues strangely silent. Then the Wreck turned away, and with bent head and slouching gait, drifted out through the door, down the stairs and into the noisy street below where he was soon lost to sight among the bustling throng.

As the office door closed on the departing figure of his brother, the financier dropped heavily into his chair and sat gazing into space, buried in deepest reverie. A picture rose before him of the little attic room and of the woman dying there, and, half unconsciously, he repeated aloud the words of her message to him.

"What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world? Yes, what doth it profit? What does anything profit for that matter? I have gained a world

and I have lost it; I have won place and power and I have lost them; I have had wealth and fame, home and friends, and to-day I sit here alone and penniless facing ruin and disgrace. To-morrow the world will know me for what I am, a thief, a defaulter; the finger of scorn will be pointed at me; the newsboys will cry my shame upon the streets. Those who have been my friends will be friends no longer. Truly the day has come, as she said it would, when everything is slipping away from me and I sit facing the end of all things."

He glanced at the desk and his eye fell on the letter he had been writing when interrupted by the entrance of his brother. It was his farewell to his wife in which he confessed the ruin and disgrace he would not live to face. To-morrow, his shame would be published to the world, but he would not wait to see that to-morrow. To-night, almost any moment now, they might come to arrest him, but he would escape them. In the drawer of his desk lay the revolver with which he meant to end it all.

Such had been his thoughts while writing that letter, several hours ago, before the Wreck had stood

there on the mat by the door. Since then, something had happened, a message had been sent him, a message from the dead. What was it she had said?

“He may gain the whole world but the day will come when he must lose it all. Bid him remember on that day that he still has a soul to save.”

He picked up the unfinished letter and commenced slowly tearing it into tiny fragments, repeating to himself as he did so:

“Bid him remember on that day that he still has a soul to save. What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul, and, after all, a soul can be saved even through ruin and disgrace. Yes, a soul can be saved even in prison.”

A little later, when the officers of the law came to take him, it was with a smile that he went forward to meet them.

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